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ABSTRACT

The Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (RCA) directed the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assess the country's nonfederal soil and water resources and to develop a program to conserve these and related natural resources. During this process, the USDA prepared and circulated for public comment a draft appraisal, draft program report, environmental impact statement, and summary document. Presented in this report is an analysis of the more than 65,000 responses received during the 60-day public review period in regard to these four publications. Topics addressed include status and condition of soil and water resources, conservation objectives, alternative conservation strategies, the USDA and its current programs, and related resource conservation issues. Incorporated into the text are comments from the USDA-RCA public opinion survey conducted by Louis Harris and Associates. (WB)

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United States Department of Agriculture

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Report of the Public's Comments on the RCA Draft Documents, January-March 1980

Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act

ED193083

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

September 1980

PREFACE

The Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (RCA) (PL 95-192) directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to solicit information and ideas on resource conservation from interested citizens. In accordance with provisions of the law, USDA distributed copies of the draft Appraisal, Program Report and Environmental Impact Statement, and Summary to the public for comment. Comments were received by the USDA-RCA Response Analysis Center in Athens, Georgia, during the 60-day review period (January 28-March 28, 1980). This report presents the analysis of almost 65,000 responses containing more than 1.5 million separate comments. These responses are from individuals, organizations, and government agencies and were signed by more than 118,000 people.

This report was prepared in order to--

- o provide a report that the Secretary of Agriculture, other members of the Executive Branch, and the Congress can use in RCA decisionmaking.
- o convey to the RCA Coordinating Committee the nature and substance of the public comments.
- o provide a documentary record of what the public said.
- o provide a basis for comparing the public response to the RCA draft documents with the Louis Harris and Associates public opinion survey.

This report presents important information for decisionmakers to consider as they develop the USDA national conservation program. In this regard, a few words of caution are in order. The Public Response Evaluation Team urges all users of this report to bear in mind that comments received from the public as part of public participation activities are not derived through statistically designed sampling procedures. Therefore, these comments do not provide a basis for drawing inferences about the views of the general public nor do they allow users to generalize about the views of all farmers, all members of other groups, or the total population. This does not, however, diminish the usefulness of these comments to decisionmakers. These comments represent the views and priorities of an interested segment of the public.

Comments from the USDA-RCA public opinion survey, conducted by Louis Harris and Associates, are incorporated into the text of this report. Survey findings are marked by brackets and are indented.

When considering both types of comments, RCA decisionmakers may want to review the following caveats presented by Drs. Lester Milbrath and Steven Cohen. 1/

o In public participation activities, responses are submitted voluntarily. This suggests that the respondent has a high level of motivation and initiative. Many of the responses are in the form of personal letters, which take a good

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1/ Milbrath, Lester, and Steven Cohen. July 1979. A Proposed Design for a Comparative Study of Two Citizen Participation Methods. Environmental Studies Center, State University of New York at Buffalo. Prepared under contract with the Soil Conservation Service, Order #3A75-9-2047.

deal of time and energy to compose. This, as well as personal skills and psychological barriers, limits the number of those who comment.

o In statistically designed surveys, respondents are selected randomly. As a result, a survey includes people who may not have thought much about the issues. Even so, these opinions should be viewed as meaningful responses about values and preferences that will be affected by conservation program decisions.

o The relationship between a finding from the survey and a finding from the public comments is difficult to assess. The public comments may show, for example, that 40 percent of the farmers favor alternative A while 30 percent favor alternative B. There is no accurate way, since the public comments are not a random sample, to determine whether the distribution is representative of all farmers. The distribution does suggest something, however, about the attitudes of people who are likely to try to apply political pressure. If it is necessary to estimate the distribution of public opinion on an issue, the survey data presented here almost certainly are more reliable than the public comment data.

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A GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

The following list includes terms used throughout this report. As used in the report, these terms have specific meanings narrower than their generally accepted definitions.

Affiliation of respondent. Includes membership in formal organizations or association with a unit of government, a field of endeavor, or another category deemed useful for this analysis. Only one affiliation is recorded for each individual.

Comment. A statement of opinion about any topic.

Form, nonstructured. A preprinted comment form that allows respondents to type or write original comments.

Form, structured. A preprinted comment form on which respondents fill in blanks or check or circle comments that correspond to their views.

Petition. A document urging that a particular action be taken and signed by a group of people, usually 10 or more. For this report, petitions and form letters were coded the same.

RCA. The Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (PL 95-192).

Respondent. A person--representing himself, an organization, or a unit of government--who submitted a response to the Response Analysis Center.

Response. A written or oral communication submitted to the Response Analysis Center. A response contains one or more comments on aspects of the RCA drafts or related issues.

Response type. The manner in which a response was submitted. The different types are:

(1) personal letter, postcard, report, verbal comment, telegram, or mailgram.
(2) petition, form letter, or resolution.
(3) structured coupon or structured response form.
(4) nonstructured response form.
(5) transcript of public meetings.
(6) District or State Soil and Water Conservation Long-Range Plan.
(7) other.

Signature. A name affixed to a response. On the average, each response contains almost two signatures.

Topic. A discrete subject area that covers a part of the published RCA drafts or related issues. Related topics make up the various chapters in this report.

Chapter 1 - Highlights

This report is based on 64,872 responses received by the USDA-RCA Response Analysis Center in Athens, Georgia, during the public response period (January-March 1980). These responses were signed by 118,213 persons. They contain 1,513,556 separate, identifiable comments about the RCA draft documents and related issues. Responses are from every state in the Nation and the Caribbean area. The responses express the views of members of the interested public.

Analysis of these responses shows that--

- o almost three-fourths are from individuals.
- o responses from the South are proportionately greater than the nonmetropolitan population of the region; responses from the Northeast are proportionately smaller.
- o nearly half of the individuals do not identify themselves by occupation or affiliation.
- o nearly one-fourth of the responses are from those who identify themselves as farmers or ranchers.
- o one-fourth are from respondents who identify themselves as employees of federal, state, or local government.
- o well over half are structured response forms.
- o about half of all comments address the alternative strategies for conserving soil and water resources.
- o more than one-third of all comments address the conservation objectives.
- o the remaining comments address present programs, conservation activities, RCA assumptions and projections, USDA agencies, soil and water resources, and miscellaneous topics.

Respondents commenting on soil, water, and related resources--

- o value highly the Nation's soil, water, and related resources.
- o are concerned about the capacity of the Nation's resources to meet future needs.

Respondents commenting on the conservation objectives--

- o express strong support for USDA's traditional objectives relating to conservation and preservation of agricultural land.
- o support the objective of reducing soil erosion as the cornerstone of USDA conservation programs, more strongly than the other objectives.
- o support objectives directed at noncropland, such as wetlands preservation and wildlife habitat improvement, but not nearly as much as they support the traditional objectives.
- o want the Department to take an active role in helping to protect and preserve farmland without attempting direct federal control.
- o say that conservation of natural resources is important, that conservation is in the public interest, and that accomplishing the objectives would conserve resources for the future.
- o think that many conservation problems originate in urban areas and that USDA should deal with these if doing so helps to solve resource problems.

Those commenting on the activities proposed to reach the objectives--

- o say, by a 3 to 2 margin, that proposed activities, taken as a group, for achieving conservation objectives are adequate rather than inadequate.
- o most favor conservation tillage, drainage, erosion control measures, and structural flood control as effective conservation measures.
- o express least support for wetland retention policies and data collection methods.
- o most often comment on technical assistance, agricultural research, and erosion control measures.
- o express enthusiasm for both traditional and innovative USDA practices and policies for encouraging conservation.

Respondents commenting on the alternative strategies, including farmers and ranchers--

- o most favor redirecting present conservation programs and conservation performance bonuses.
- o least favor the regulatory emphasis and cross compliance.
- o generally say that they would support a national conservation program that is well funded, voluntary, and responsive to local conditions and needs.

Persons commenting on USDA agencies and their conservation programs--

- o generally believe that the programs are effective but say that the agencies could do an even better job if they had more funding, if they could provide more technical assistance, and if they were more efficient.

Those commenting on related agricultural issues--

- o favor a strong export policy, and relate this to energy needs.
- o endorse the traditional American concept of small family farms.
- o support preservation of farmland for agricultural use.
- o say that education and research--but not regulation--are appropriate areas for governmental involvement in conservation activities.

Respondents commenting on the RCA process--

- o endorse the RCA public participation effort.
- o say that the review period was too short, that too few copies of the documents were available, and that the documents should have had more exposure.
- o express some doubts about the accuracy of data in the RCA draft documents.

Chapter 2 - Background and National Summary

This chapter provides background information for this report and a broad overview of the responses received during the RCA public comment period, describes what the respondents say, and characterizes the comments submitted.

Background

The Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA) calls for USDA to appraise the soil and water resources on the Nation's nonfederal lands and to develop a national program for conservation of soil, water, and related resources. The President is to send this appraisal, a proposed program, and a statement of policy to Congress in 1980.

USDA calls its involvement with RCA activities the "RCA process." The RCA process is one of--

- o appraising resources.
- o projecting demands.
- o establishing conservation objectives.
- o developing alternative strategies to meet the objectives.
- o selecting the strategies for the recommended USDA soil and water conservation program.

Guiding this process is an interagency Coordinating Committee representing several federal agencies. 1/ The Soil Conservation Service has leadership responsibility for the RCA process.

During this process, USDA has prepared four major documents:

- o Draft Appraisal Part I.
- o Draft Appraisal Part II.
- o Draft Program Report and Environmental Impact Statement.
- o Summary of the three draft documents.

USDA circulated these documents for public comment. This report analyzes the public's comments.

The Public's Role in the RCA Process

Public participation is an important feature of RCA. The Act calls for cooperation among the Secretary of Agriculture, conservation districts, state and local agencies, and other appropriate groups to ensure public participation in developing a national soil and water conservation program.

1/ The Committee is made up of representatives of nine USDA agencies--Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS); Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service (ESCS); Farmers Home Administration (FmHA); Forest Service (FS); Rural Electrification Administration (REA); Science and Education Administration (SEA); Soil Conservation Service (SCS); Office of Budget, Planning, and Evaluation (OBPE); and Office of Environmental Quality (OEQ)--and two other federal agencies--Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Public participation in the RCA process is designed to--

- o make the public aware of and informed about the features of RCA, including their role in developing new programs.
- o make the public aware of the condition of the Nation's resources and the importance of developing a national soil and water conservation program.
- o encourage people with diverse interests to contribute information, express views, and assist decisionmakers in developing the program.
- o bring all views expressed by the public before the decisionmakers.
- o inform the public about the national conservation program that results from RCA.

There have been three major RCA public participation activities to date. First was a series of public meetings to solicit citizens' views on resource concerns and problems. Second was a public opinion survey conducted for USDA by Louis Harris and Associates. Third was soliciting public comments on the RCA draft documents.

I: Defining resource concerns.--Public meetings were initially selected as the primary technique to enlist public participation. The first series of public meetings was held to obtain the views of the interested public regarding soil and water conservation concerns and problems and to identify potential solutions. During 1978, more than 164,000 people attended 9,000 state and local meetings where RCA was explained and discussed. These meetings were held throughout the country in virtually all conservation districts. In September 1978, public meetings were held at five locations throughout the country to identify broad area resource problems and concerns. These meetings were held in Washington, D.C.; Arlington, Texas; Oakland, California; Atlanta, Georgia; and Schiller Park, Illinois.

II: The public opinion survey.--Between October 19 and November 21, 1979, Louis Harris and Associates conducted a public opinion survey to determine public attitudes regarding conservation of soil, water, and related resources. During the survey, in-person interviews were held with 7,010 adults representing a cross section of the Nation's population. Some of the survey's major findings are included in this report.

III: Soliciting public comments.--During January and February 1980, USDA held 18 regional meetings to solicit comments from the public. Citizens were invited to submit written comments. These comments were directed to the USDA-RCA Response Analysis Center in Athens, Georgia. The Center was staffed by SCS and other USDA employees, supplemented by locally hired employees. The center began operations on February 19, 1980, and completed operations on May 1, 1980.

Several important points should be kept in mind when reading this report.

- o Responses generated during a public comment period cannot be used as a basis for generalization or inference because they are not derived from a statistically designed sampling procedure, such as the Louis Harris and Associates public opinion survey.

o The reason why people and organizations choose to respond during a public comment period may not be known. However, the fact that the respondents wrote to USDA about RCA indicates that they had access to information about RCA and that they were aware that USDA was asking for comments. This is not true of the majority of U.S. citizens.

> [The Harris survey indicates that even though 79 percent of the public prefers a country with many chances for citizens to have a say in government decisions, only a third of the public has participated in a government decision (for example, by writing a letter to the government).]

National Scope of the Response

This report analyzes 64,872 responses, which contain 1,513,556 identifiable comments. Since many of the responses carry more than one signature, 118,213 people are represented.

Responses were received from every state in the Union and from the Caribbean area. For purposes of this analysis, the country was divided into four regions on the basis of natural resource characteristics. These regions are shown in figure 2-1.

Comparison of responses and signatures to regional population.--Responses were not generated uniformly across the country, nor are they proportional to the nonmetropolitan population. Forty-four percent of the responses and 46 percent of the signatures come from the South. The South has 30 percent of the Nation's nonmetropolitan population and 23 percent of the total population. Disproportionately few responses are from the Northeast. See table 2-1 and figures 2-2, 2-3, and 2-4.

Type of response.--People responded in a variety of ways. Fifty-seven percent of the responses were submitted on structured response forms. Many of these forms are the version distributed by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), or a variation. The extent to which these forms, which identify key issues in the RCA documents, tended to lead respondents to consider pertinent issues of the RCA process that the respondent might not have otherwise considered or addressed, is unknown. All told, 82 different response forms were used. Structured response forms account for 37,264 responses, which include 72,307 signatures. Over 4,000 petitions and form letters transmitted 13,993 signatures, or 12 percent of all signatures. Other respondents sent 15,400 personal letters, or 24 percent of all responses. Respondents from the Northeast sent more letters than structured response forms. Respondents from the other regions sent more structured forms than letters. See table 2-2.

Type of respondent.--Respondents are classified in one of the 17 groups shown in tables 2-3 and 2-4. Most respondents are individuals. Individuals submitted 46,242 responses bearing almost 91,000 signatures. Agencies of local and state governments and of the federal government sent 16,322 responses, farm organizations submitted 746, and environmental organizations, 643.

These six categories of respondents account for nearly all (98.6 percent) responses and signatures. As shown in table 2-5, individuals account for 71 percent of all responses and 77 percent of all signatures. Government agencies account for about 25 percent of all responses and 20 percent of all signatures.

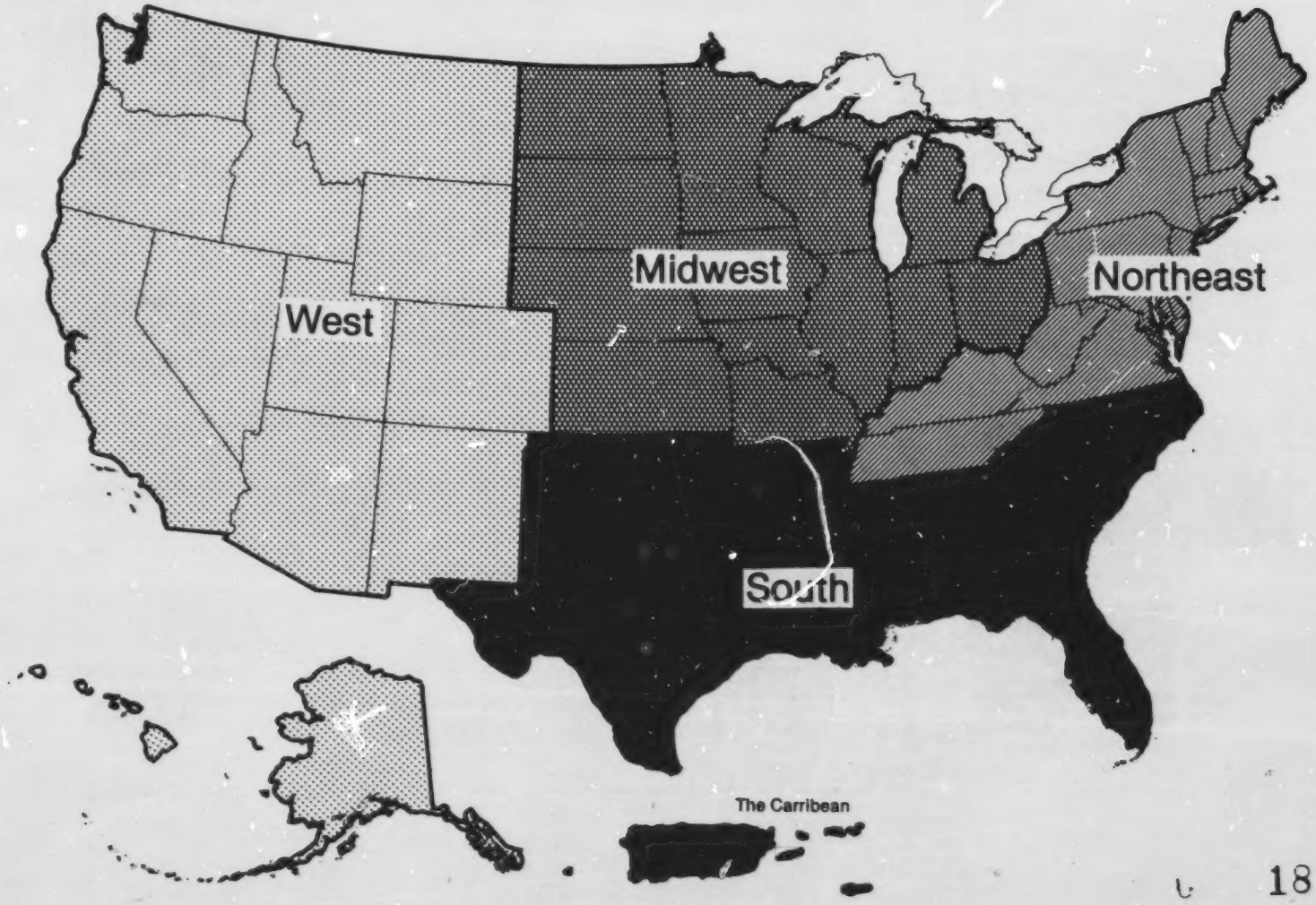
Affiliation of respondent.--Twenty-two percent of all responses are from respondents who identify themselves as farmers or ranchers. Ten percent are from people who identified themselves as affiliated with conservation districts. On nearly half of the responses, the respondents do not identify their affiliation. Table 2-6 shows affiliation of respondents.

Content of responses.--Respondents discuss a wide variety of ideas, issues, and items. For computer processing, these statements were recorded according to a coding system organized into topics and comments. "Topic" is the label given to a discrete subject area such as an alternative strategy, an objective, or an activity. "Comment" is the label given to the opinion that the respondent expresses about the topic. Comments on alternative strategies and conservation objectives account for nearly 90 percent of all comments.

Almost 40 percent of all comments are accounted for by five comment codes, which express a range of opinion from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." These five comments were structured into the NACD reply form and similar forms. The other 60 percent of the comments are represented by 890 codes. Of these, 30 codes each account for between 1 and 3 percent of the comments, and the other 860 codes each account for less than 1 percent of the comments. Table 2-7 shows how the comments are distributed among the topics.

The following chapters in this report discuss the content of these responses in detail. An appendix to this report has been printed and bound separately for limited distribution.

Figure 2-1. – Regional Divisions Used in This Report



2-5

Figure 2-2. – Ratio of Signatures to Responses

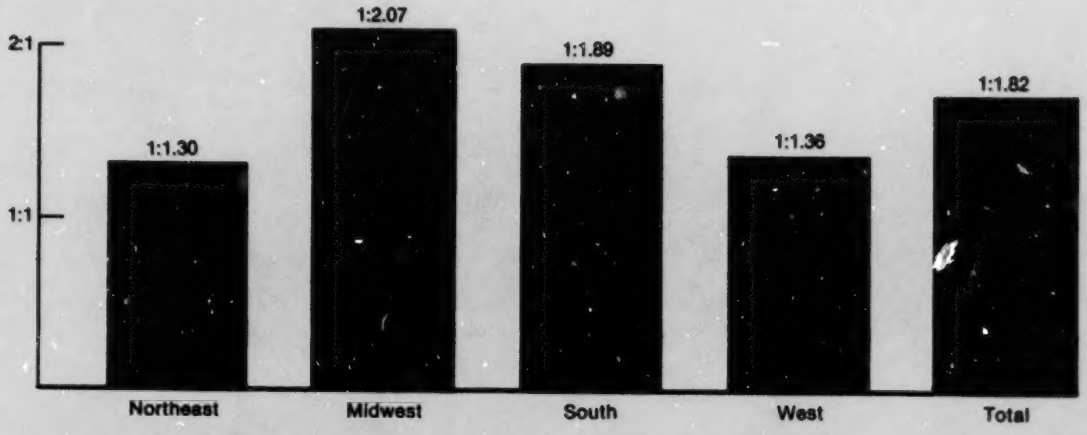


Figure 2-3. – Number of Responses and Signatures, by RCA Region

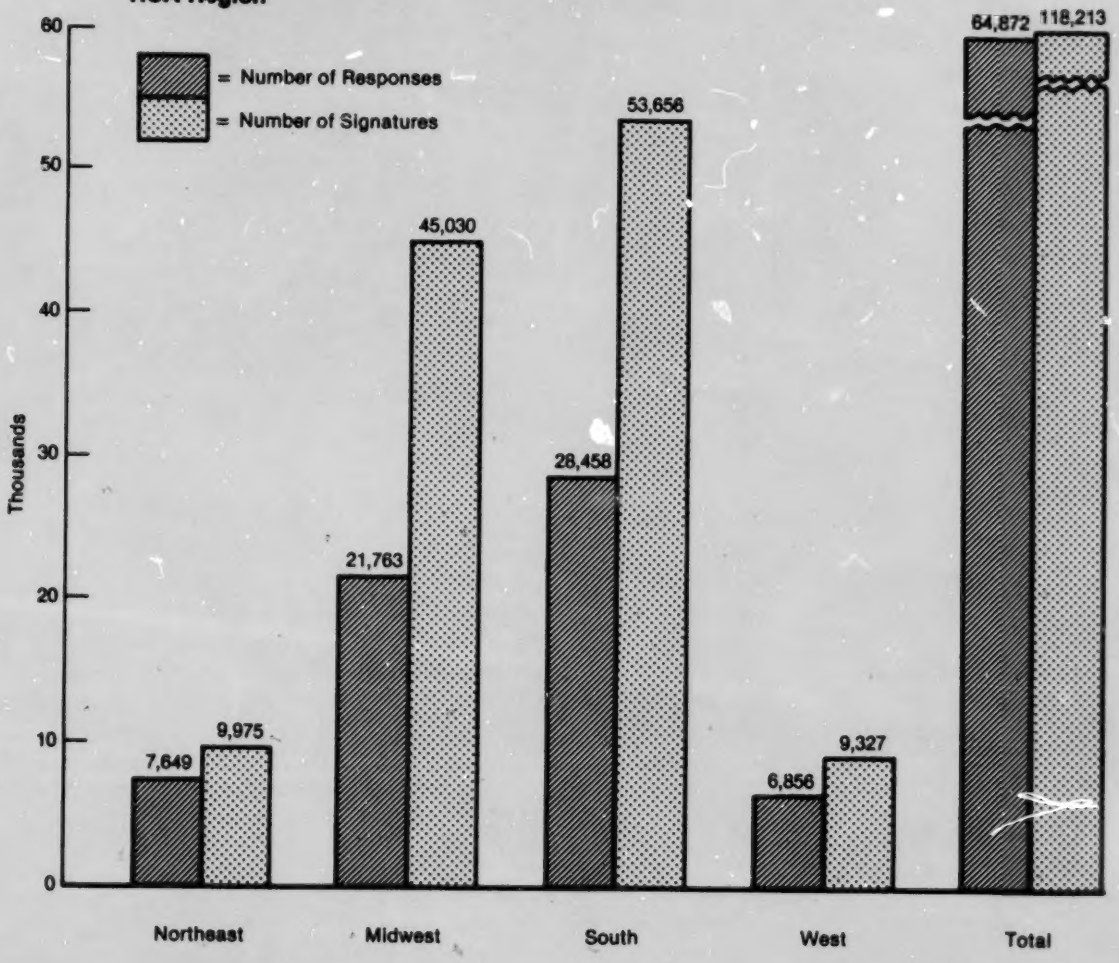


Table 2-1.--Responses and signatures, by RCA region

RCA region	Responses		Signatures	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Northeast	7,649	12	9,975	8
Midwest	21,763	33	45,030	38
South	28,458	44	53,656	46
West	6,856	11	9,327	8
Total 1/	64,872	100	118,213	100

1/ Total includes responses where the state of origin is not known.

Figure 2-4. - The Distribution of Responses to the RCA Drafts and the Distribution of the Nation's Nonmetropolitan Population (ESCS data for 1978), by RCA region.

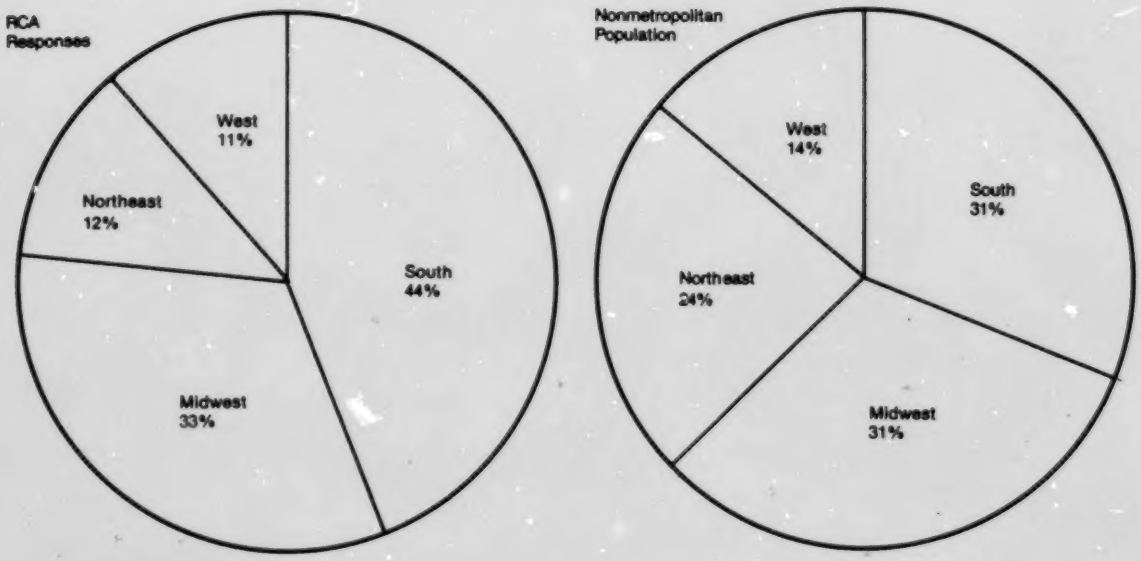


Table 2-2.--Responses

By response type and RCA region

Response type	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Total 1/
Personal letter--	3,101	3,753	6,645	1,851	15,400
Petition---------	234	406	3,275	135	4,052
Response form:					
Structured------	2,511	14,036	16,357	4,286	37,264
Nonstructured---	1,751	3,455	2,092	502	7,820
Other 2/---------	52	113	89	82	336
Total----------	7,649	21,763	28,458	6,856	64,872

Percentage distribution among RCA regions, by response type

Personal letter--	41	17	23	27	24
Petition---------	3	2	12	2	6
Response form:					
Structured------	33	64	57	63	57
Nonstructured---	23	16	7	7	12
Other 2/---------	1	1	*	1	1
Total 3/-------	100	100	100	100	100

Percentage distribution among response types, by RCA region

Personal letter--	20	24	43	12	100
Petition---------	6	10	81	3	100
Response form:					
Structured------	7	38	44	12	100
Nonstructured---	22	44	27	6	100
Other 2/---------	15	34	26	24	100
Total----------	12	33	44	11	100 3/

1/ Total includes responses where the state of origin is not known.
2/ "Other" responses include transcripts of public hearings, oral responses, and telegraphs.
3/ Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.
* Less than 0.5 percent.

Table 2-3.--Responses, by respondent type and RCA region

Respondent type	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Unknown	Total
Academic	16	17	31	8	0	72
Agribusiness	10	22	52	13	0	97
Business/industry	14	4	100	26	0	144
Civic/social	9	7	90	6	0	112
Commodity organization	26	29	42	42	0	139
Environmental organization	131	241	197	74	0	643
Farm organization	119	240	304	83	0	746
Federal government	428	1,484	1,988	611	9	4,520
Individual	5,636	15,175	21,030	4,278	123	46,242
Industry/trade group	8	11	15	1	0	35
Labor organization	0	1	1	1	0	3
Local government	1,057	4,107	4,012	1,447	12	10,635
Minority organization	2	7	33	6	0	48
State government	174	337	498	157	1	1,167
Youth organization	1	1	32	2	0	36
Other groups and organizations	7	14	26	10	0	57
Other	3	59	7	91	16	176
Total	7,641	21,756	28,458	6,856	161	64,872

Table 2-4.--Signatures, by respondent type and RCA region

Respondent type	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Unknown	Total
Academic	16	17	33	8	0	74
Agribusiness	11	24	62	13	0	110
Business/industry	14	4	106	27	0	151
Civic/social	9	6	127	6	0	148
Commodity organization	26	41	43	44	0	154
Environmental organization	162	312	285	139	0	898
Farm organizations	153	369	586	99	0	1,207
Federal government	505	1,981	2,935	965	10	6,396
Individual	7,454	36,079	41,985	5,279	197	90,994
Industry/trade group	8	11	13	1	0	33
Labor organization	0	1	1	1	0	3
Local government	1,401	5,323	6,496	2,387	14	15,621
Minority organization	2	7	33	5	0	47
State government	203	473	728	237	4	1,645
Youth organization	1	1	61	2	0	65
Other groups and organizations	7	104	158	21	0	290
Other	3	277	4	93	0	377
Total	9,975	45,030	53,656	9,327	225	118,213

Table 2-5.--Responses and signatures, by selected respondent type

Respondent type	Number		Percentage of--	
	Responses	Signatures	Responses	Signatures
Individual	46,242	90,994	71	77
Local government	10,635	15,621	16	13
Federal government	4,520	6,396	7	5
State government	1,167	1,645	2	1
Farm organization	746	1,207	1	1
Environmental organization	643	898	1	1
All others	919	1,452	1	1
Total	64,872	118,213	100	100

Table 2-6.--Responses, by affiliation of respondent

Affiliation of respondent	Number	Percent
Farmer/rancher	14,351	22
Conservation district official	7,086	11
ASC county committee member	2,339	4
Professional	1,677	3
Houseperson	1,049	2
Student	380	1
Soil Conservation Service	323	*
Environmental organization	127	*
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service	122	*
Farm Bureau	109	*
Other affiliated respondents	1,437	2
Other groups	4,488	7
Unknown affiliation	31,384	48
Total	64,872	100

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Table 2-7.--Comments

By topic group and respondent type

Respondent type	Assumptions & projections	Resources	Objectives	Activities	Alternative strategies	Agencies	Present programs	Related Issues	Miscellaneous	Total
Individuals----------	12,417	11,348	298,113	21,310	349,383	14,545	40,403	8,433	15,741	771,703
Local government-------	7,900	2,174	168,330	3,145	246,695	1,951	5,106	1,464	2,107	438,872
State government-------	742	506	16,208	536	24,278	355	731	170	498	44,019
Federal government-----	3,273	1,069	70,947	1,798	114,266	1,123	2,776	638	982	196,872
Farm organizations-----	472	173	9,940	247	14,384	204	417	130	308	26,275
Environmental groups---	469	337	9,727	302	13,533	131	329	214	253	25,206
All other----------	103	412	4,617	472	3,220	432	245	288	820	10,609
Total comments-----	25,376	16,019	577,882	27,810	765,759	18,741	50,097	11,258	20,704	1,513,556
Percentage distribution, by topic group										
Individuals----------	49	71	51	77	46	78	80	75	76	51
Local government-------	31	14	29	11	32	10	10	13	10	29
State government-------	3	3	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	3
Federal government-----	13	7	12	6	15	6	6	6	5	13
Farm organizations-----	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
Environmental groups---	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	1
All other----------	*	2	1	2	*	2	1	2	3	1
Total----------	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Percentage distribution, by respondent type										
Individuals----------	2	1	39	3	45	2	5	1	2	100
Local government-------	2	*	38	1	56	*	1	*	*	100
State government-------	2	1	37	1	55	1	2	*	1	100
Federal government-----	2	1	36	1	58	1	1	*	*	100
Farm organizations-----	2	1	38	1	55	1	2	*	1	100
Environmental groups---	2	1	39	1	54	1	1	1	1	100
All other----------	1	4	44	4	30	4	2	3	8	100
Total----------	2	1	38	2	51	1	3	1	1	100

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Chapter 3 - The RCA Process; Assumptions and Projections

This chapter presents an evaluation of the comments on the RCA process and on the basic assumptions and projections that the U.S. Department of Agriculture used in developing alternative programs for conserving soil and water.

The RCA Process

The process encompasses the general procedures for implementing the Resources Conservation Act and provides a framework for formulating the final RCA program alternatives. It includes appraising resources, projecting future conditions and demands, and identifying objectives and strategies for action. It also includes a public review of the RCA draft documents.

The scope of the response.--Nationwide, 2,540 comments deal with the RCA process. Forty-six percent come from the South region, 27 percent from the Midwest, 17 percent from the West, and 10 percent from the Northeast.

The affiliation of 47 percent of the respondents is unknown. Only 19 percent identify themselves as farmers or ranchers. The following list shows the number of comments and signatures on the RCA process by topic.

Topic	Number of comments	Number of signatures
General procedures	1,931	2,418
Public participation	609	742
Total	2,540	3,160

General procedures.--There are 1,931 comments relating to general procedures. More than half (51 percent) say that the documents should have been given more public exposure and that the Department did not give people enough time to review the documents. Nearly 20 percent say that the Department will ignore public opinion, and 12 percent say that the number of people exposed to the RCA documents is too small to represent public opinion.

Other comments include the following ideas:

- Regional meetings should have been held in agricultural areas.
- Information from the Harris survey and the 1978 RCA public meetings should be used.
- The public needs to understand how data are collected.
- A resources poll may yield inaccurate results.
- All USDA agencies should participate in RCA.
- Soil conservation district involvement in RCA should be limited.
- The questionnaire used in some conservation districts should have been prepared by professional pollsters.

Public participation.--As the following list shows, most of the comments on public participation come from the South and Midwest.

RCA Region	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Northeast	94	15
Midwest	186	31
South	206	34
West	123	20
Total	609	100

The 609 comments relating to public participation cover a wide range of ideas that are not readily grouped or summarized. About 17 percent are positive, saying that public participation is useful in identifying trends or that the Department should give additional emphasis to public participation or expressing general support for and agreement with public participation.

> [The results of the Harris survey indicated that the public wants a greater voice in governmental decisions. Of those sampled in the survey, 70 percent said that they preferred a country that is willing to put up with some delay in order to let more people have a say in big decisions. Seventy-nine percent preferred a country that gives citizens many chances to participate in government decisions.
>
> People say that in general the government agencies give insufficient review time. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 31 percent said that they would have participated much more in the federal government's decisions if they had had more advance notice of when decisions were going to be made. Forty-seven percent said that they would have participated somewhat more or a little more.]

About 9 percent of the comments on public participation are critical. These comments say that the public participation process should have been clearer and simpler, that the program is expensive and useless, and that data are in error or are incomplete.

> [People seem to find communicating with government generally complex or difficult. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, only 29 percent said that they fully or mostly understood how to influence the decision of a federal government agency or department, 32 percent said that they understood only a little, and 38 percent said that they hardly understood at all. Eighteen percent said that they would like the government to provide more detailed explanations of problems and proposed solutions, 26 percent said that they would like the government to provide brief summaries of problems and proposed solutions, 28 percent said they would like the government to tell them where to get more facts on the problems and proposed solutions, and 21 percent said that all they needed to know was what agency was in charge of certain problems. Thirty-three percent said that they have tried personally to influence the federal government's decisions; 65 percent said that they have not. Forty percent of those sampled said that in the last 5 years they have

increased their participation in the government's decisions, 31 percent said that they are participating less often, and 28 percent said that they are participating at the same rate.]

A large number of the comments cover diverse opinions on a wide range of subjects related to public participation. These comments include the following suggestions:

- o Increase funding.
- o Educate citizens on land stewardship.
- o Expand public participation.
- o Hold workshops and meetings.
- o Improve efficiency and coordination among citizens, businesses, and public agencies.
- o Consider incentives for nonagricultural landowners.
- o Provide tax incentives to ensure participation.
- o Support the American farmer.
- o Provide an adequate assessment.
- o Base project activity on public opinion.
- o Actively promote soil conservation.
- o Give farmers the major voice in the development of agricultural policies and programs.
- o Conservation serves the best interests of all Americans.
- o Divide conservation costs equally among all people.

Assumptions and Projections

RCA assumptions and projections are based on extrapolations from recent trends, knowledge about developments that may affect the future, and reasonable expectations about future changes.

Population changes greatly affect the demand for food and fiber, outdoor recreation, and water. Population distribution has a strong influence on state and regional demands for renewable resources. For the RCA analysis, USDA used the Commerce Department's 1977 projections of moderate population growth. Under these projections, the Nation's population would grow from 215.2 million people in 1976 to 260.4 million in the year 2000 and to 300.3 million in 2030.

Disposable personal income--income available for spending or saving--is an important determinant of demand. Per capita disposable income (in 1972 dollars) was projected to increase from an average of $4,148 in 1975-77 to $7,640 in the year 2000 and to $13,779 in 2030. USDA used three levels of exports to estimate the effect of exports on food and fiber demand: (1) no exports, (2) 1975-77 export levels, and (3) a projected moderate growth in exports. Demand for agricultural products for domestic consumption only (no exports) in 2030 would rise by 107 percent; for domestic consumption plus 1975-77 export levels, by 142 percent; and for domestic consumption plus projected exports, by 172 percent.

Technological growth is one of the main factors influencing the productive capacity of American agriculture. Increases in productivity due to technological improvements are projected to be 1.1 percent per year through the year 2000 and 0.8 percent per year between 2000 and 2030. The Department will conduct additional analyses to evaluate the sensitivity of future resource problems to higher or lower rates of growth in agricultural productivity.

The scope of the response.--Nationwide, 25,376 comments deal with the assumptions and projections. Forty-five percent come from the South region, 37 percent from the Midwest, 11 percent from the West, and 7 percent from the Northeast. The following list shows the regional distribution of comments and signatures.

RCA Region	Number of comments	Number of signatures
Northeast	2,799	6,988
Midwest	9,086	16,173
South	10,096	15,838
West	3,335	5,483
Unknown	61	61
Total	25,376	44,543

Comments were received in the following forms:

Form of response	Number of comments
Structured response form	21,588
Petition	1,677
Personal letter	1,602
Nonstructured response form	424
Public transcript	73
Other	12
Total	25,376

Table 3-1 shows respondent types. Sixty percent of the respondents are individuals. The respondents represent various organizations and interest groups.

Most of the comments on assumptions and projections address energy. Economic assumptions are addressed next most frequently. The following list shows the distribution of the comments. Many of the comments coded to the assumptions and projections concern the general topic rather than a specific assumption or projection as stated in the draft documents.

Topic	Number of comments
Population	156
Economics	5,171
Energy	19,652
Technological change	115
Other/all assumptions and projections	282
Total	25,376

Table 3-1.--Comments and signatures on assumptions and projections, by respondent type

Respondent type		Number of comments	Number of signatures
Academic		14	14
Agribusiness		14	16
Business/industry		15	19
Civic/social		6	15
Commodity		25	28
Environmental groups		469	546
Farm organizations		472	617
Federal government		3,273	4,335
Individual (total)		12,417	26,226
Farmer/rancher	5,345		
Professional	786		
Houseperson	510		
Other individual	5,776		
Industry/trade groups		7	8
Local government (total)		7,900	11,688
Conservation district	5,191		
ASC county committee	1,584		
Other local government	1,125		
Minority organizations		2	2
State government		742	936
Youth organizations		2	31
Other groups		5	27
Other		13	35
Total		25,376	44,543

Population.--Of the 156 comments addressing USDA's population projections, 19 percent are positive comments dealing with how conservation planning could meet future demands for food. Seven percent say it is important enough that additional emphasis is needed, and 11 percent say that the soil would support the projected population. Other comments include:

- Increased returns will encourage conservation.
- Farm the land at maximum capacity to meet increased demand.
- Projecting population trends is an effective use of tax dollars.
- High general rating.
- Control population to limit strain on resources.
- Control population through taxation or education.

About 25 percent of the comments on population assumptions and projections are critical. Some say that the data are in error, others say that there are too few data in the Summary to make agricultural decisions, and still others think that more accountability is needed.

Additional comments say:

- The public should know how the data were collected.
- Technical assistance is needed.
- Additional research and development are needed.
- Terms are difficult to measure.
- Information is inadequately presented.
- Population control is needed.
- Unrelated to RCA.

Fifty-four percent of the comments are general statements about population trends and projections. These comments include the following:

- Food:
  - Capitalize on surplus of agricultural products to reduce trade deficit.
  - Support a waste not-want not philosophy.
  - Deterioration of resources is a serious problem that will increase.
  - We cannot feed the world; provide technical assistance to other countries.
- Land:
  - Save agricultural land for the future.
  - Put houses on land not suitable for farming or grazing.
  - Cultivate flood plains; use sod cover during the flood cycle.
  - Limit residential use to nonfarm areas and to land unsuitable for farming.
  - Prohibit building of public facilities on prime agricultural land.
- Conservation:
  - Conservation of natural resources is the Nation's first priority, even before production.
  - Farmers' problems and their use of land should interest all Americans.
  - American farmers are the greatest in the world; they are very efficient and deserve support.
  - Increase funds for cost sharing.
- Planning is essential.

Economics.--This topic received 5,171 comments, over half of which (55 percent) favor a strong export policy. About 10 percent say that conservation is enhanced by higher profits and should be tied to economics.

> [Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 86 percent said that the Nation's excess of imports over exports is a very serious or somewhat serious problem. Only 5 percent said that it is hardly a serious problem, and 7 percent were not sure.]

The rest of the comments address a wide range of sometimes contradictory ideas, including the following:

- Balance exports using long range supply projections.
- Use exports as a political tool to balance trade and influence world affairs.
- Maintain current export levels.
- Export no agricultural products.
- Do not sacrifice farm income for the benefit of the consumer.
- The data are correct.
- The data are in error.

- o The linear programming model is not constrained enough and may give the wrong impression.
- o Do not permit exports or imports to affect farm production.
- o Capitalize on surplus agricultural products to reduce the trade deficit.
- o Conservation increases productivity.
- o RCA should place more emphasis on the role of economics in agriculture.
- o Additional emphasis is needed.

Energy.--Energy received 19,652 comments, by far the largest number of all comments coded to assumptions and projections. Almost all (93 percent) of the comments relate energy to a strong export policy for agricultural products. Most of the comments (67 percent) encourage the use of farm exports to pay for oil imports, thereby reducing the Nation's trade deficit. The remainder (26 percent) support maintaining the 1975-77 level of exports.

[The Harris survey indicated that a great many people are concerned about energy use, particularly as it relates to the import and export of oil. Forty-nine percent of those questioned by the Harris survey believed that gasohol will help reduce oil imports in the next 5 years; 23 percent believed that synfuels will; 11 percent, that both will; and 4 percent, that neither will.]

Other comments on energy assumptions include the following:

- o Export no agricultural products.
- o Conduct studies on energy-saving conservation methods.
- o Diversify energy sources from oil to solar, methane, and others.
- o Educate the public about conservation and the environment.
- o Produce gasohol from agricultural and processing residues.
- o Halt excess transportation between states and regions.
- o Emphasize the effects of energy use in agriculture.

Technological change.--One hundred fifteen comments are coded to the projections of technological change, and these vary widely. More than 20 percent suggest that more emphasis be given to technology, USDA demonstration farms, and research. Others say that funding should be increased. About 15 percent say that the data are in error or are based on too little information. About 7 percent say that technology must be flexible enough to meet a wide variety of needs and changing economic conditions. Other comments include the following:

- o Diversify energy sources.
- o Protect water and air from pollution.
- o End dependence on technology; farmers should return to basics.
- o The chemical industry should develop safer and more specific pesticides.
- o USDA should encourage and subsidize organic farming.
- o Provide more technical assistance.
- o Conservation increases production.

Other/all assumptions and projections.--Of the 282 comments on other or all assumptions and projections, about 8 percent are favorable. Four percent say that the data are useful in identifying national trends and making policy decisions and that the data should be given more emphasis. About 42 percent

of the comments are critical of or unfavorable to the reports. Thirty-five percent say that the data are in error, unrealistic, or unfounded. Other comments say that the material presented should have been simplified. Other comments include the following:

- RCA is too expensive.
- Documents are expensive and meaningless.
- RCA needs adequate funding consistent with problems and needs.
- Environmental concerns and cheap food are not compatible.
- Loss of farmland to road construction is a big problem.
- Conservation must be implemented on a continuous, long term basis.
- Pollutants come from urban areas as well as agriculture.
- Appraisal and Program Report are biased toward cropland and water resources.

Summary

Some of the respondents endorse the public participation effort and express appreciation for the opportunity to comment. However, some are disappointed with the RCA process and public participation effort. These respondents say that there was not enough time for review, that not enough copies of the documents were available, and that meeting places were inconvenient. They also say, however, that public review and participation are desirable and need more publicity.

Those who commented on assumptions and projections overwhelmingly support a high level of agricultural exports to boost farm income and balance trade. Some respondents doubt the accuracy of the assumptions and projections but say that such information would be useful if it were valid. The public wants more information on the relationship between conservation and economics.

Chapter 4 - Soil, Water, and Related Resources

This chapter examines the comments concerning the status and condition of and trends in soil, water, and related resources. A full discussion of this subject is contained in the RCA Appraisal Parts I and II.

Comments on resources fall into the following categories: soil, water, fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands, energy, waste (organic, inorganic, solid), outdoor recreation, open space and scenic landscapes, all natural resources, and other resources. Number of signatures was examined but is discussed only where significant. The ratio of signatures to comments is as follows: all natural resources, 4:1; water, 3:1; fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands, and soil, 2:1; and the rest, about 1:1.

Regional variations in data are noted. Respondents in the Northeast make about 24 percent of the comments on natural resources but only 8 percent of all comments on all topics.

The Scope of the Response

Nationwide, 16,019 comments deal with the status and condition of and trends in soil, water, and related resources. Thirty-nine percent come from the South region, 25 percent from the Midwest, 24 percent from the Northeast, and 12 percent from the West. Comments were received in the following forms:

Form of response	Number of comments
Personal letter	5,415
Petition	2,567
Structured response form	4,467
Nonstructured response form	3,310
Public transcript	215
Other	45
Total	16,019

Most of the comments, 71 percent, are from individuals. The respondent types are:

Respondent type	Number of comments
Individuals	11,348
Local government	2,174
Federal government	1,069
State government	506
Environmental groups	337
Farm organizations	173
All other	412
Total	16,019

Only 1 percent of all RCA comments specifically mention soil, water, and related resources. The relatively low numbers of comments dealing with

resource topics may have resulted from the fact that few structured response forms directly address resource status, condition, and trends. The number and distribution of comments by resource topic are shown in the following list:

Resource topic	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Soil (quality and quantity)	2,611	16
Water (quality, supply, and need for conservation)	4,726	29
Fish and wildlife habitat	2,307	14
Wetlands	702	5
Energy	1,377	9
Waste management (organic, inorganic, solid)	422	3
Recreation	161	1
Open space/scenic landscapes	149	1
All natural resources	2,129	13
Other resources	1,435	9
Total	16,019	100

On the following pages, comments on the various resource areas are discussed in detail.

Soil Resources

Comments on soil resources fall into the following categories: importance of soil resources, problems associated with soil resources, proposed solutions to resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of soil resources	1,028	39
Problems associated with soil resources	419	16
Proposed solutions to resource problems	406	16
Other comments	758	29
Total	2,611	100

Importance of soil resources.--The comments on importance fall into three groups--high, medium, and low--according to the respondents' perceptions of the value of the resource. "Soil and water are the most valuable resources" and "steps toward conservation and protection deserve immediate attention" are comments that fall into the "high" ranking. "Neutral" and "maintain at same level" are comments that fall into the "medium" group. The "low" ranking includes comments such as "generally opposed" or "disagree." The ranking follows:

Ranking	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
High	937	91
Medium	56	6
Low	35	3
Total	1,028	100

Problems associated with soil resources.--The respondents mention two kinds of problems--those related to soil resources and those associated with the RCA documents (for example, inadequate or incomplete data). Examples of comments on the problems associated with soil resources are "saline seeps are a major conservation problem," "need to be more realistic in defining and describing soil erosion," "deterioration of resources is a serious problem which will increase," and "support services are essential: soil survey, plant materials center, inventorying and monitoring, etc." The distribution of these comments follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Soil resources	103	25
RCA documents	316	75
Total	419	100

Proposed solutions to soil resource problems.--Comments concerning the proposed solutions for soil problems fall into four broad groups: general policy, efficiency in government, incentives for soil conservation, and farm management. Each group of proposed solutions is shown below, with typical comments.

o General policy.--This group accounts for 12 percent of the comments proposing solutions to soil related problems. Typical comments are:
  - o Support a "waste not and use less" philosophy.
  - o Develop a continuing long term policy for conservation.
  - o Make "setaside" a permanent long term program and tie it to conservation.
  - o Increase research and development on soil related problems.
  - o Promote soil conservation through information and education.

o Efficiency in government.--This group accounts for 4 percent of the comments proposing solutions to soil related problems. Selected comments follow:
  - o Consolidate and phase out poor programs.
  - o Eliminate duplication.
  - o Use existing agencies and administer them more efficiently.

o Incentives for soil conservation.--This group accounts for 39 percent of the comments proposing solutions to soil related problems. Selected comments follow:
  - o Provide incentives, price supports, long term loans, investment credits, low-cost insurance, and revenue sharing for conservation.
  - o Increase funding for soil and water conservation.
  - o Reinstate cost sharing.
  - o Divide the cost of conservation equally among all of the people in the Nation.

- Require that soil loss be less than T value as a condition for participation in USDA programs.
- Administer and enforce conservation and sediment control laws and ordinances.
- Keep soil and water conservation voluntary.

o Farm management.--Forty-five percent of the comments proposing solutions to soil related problems are in this group. Selected comments follow:

- Use soil surveys to identify soil problems.
- Base conservation decisions on the conservation plan.
- Fine tune existing conservation practices.
- Enforce maintenance of conservation systems.
- Use land within its capability; plant marginal land to grass or trees.
- Plant and maintain windbreaks for wind erosion control, wildlife habitat, and firewood.
- Encourage conservation tillage or no-till.
- Improve soil quality by using manure, sod-based rotations, lime, fertilizer, soil building crops, and chemicals.
- Carefully control clearcutting on erodible soils.
- Use new timber harvesting machinery and techniques to reduce soil compaction, erosion, and streambed disturbance.

[Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 62 percent said a shortage of good land for producing food is likely or somewhat likely within the next 10 years. Thirty-five percent said it is unlikely there will be such a shortage. About 82 percent said the loss of good farmland is a very serious or somewhat serious problem, and 83 percent supported government action to control soil erosion and to prevent irreversible conversion of the best farmland to other uses.]

Water Resources

Comments on water resources fall into the following categories: importance of water resources, problems associated with water resources, proposed solutions to resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of water resources	1,421	30
Problems associated with water resources	658	14
Proposed solutions to resource problems	1,482	31
Other	1,165	25
Total	4,726	100

Importance of water resources.--The following list shows the respondents' perceptions of the importance--high, medium, or low--of water resources. Examples of comments that fall into the "high" group include "water resources are worth protecting at any cost," "the production of food and fiber is of

top priority," and "very concerned about the future of water resources." "Maintain these resources at the present level" was assigned to the "medium" group. "No need for a national soil and water conservation program" and "very low rating for water resources" are examples of comments in the "low" group.

Ranking	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
High	1,296	91
Medium	63	5
Low	62	4
Total	1,421	100

Problems associated with water resources.--The respondents identify problems related to water resources and problems with the RCA documents. Examples of comments in the resource problem group are "environmental concern and cheap food are not compatible," "many structural measures compound ecological problems," and "road salt runoff into streams is a major problem." Problems related to the RCA documents concern inadequate or inaccurate information. The distribution of comments dealing with water resource problems follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Water resources	202	31
RCA documents	456	69
Total	658	100

Proposed solutions to water resource problems.--Comments concerning proposed solutions to resource problems are displayed in this section. These comments are sumarized below.

o Conservation of water resources.--This group includes 11 percent of the comments offering solutions to problems affecting water resources. Selected comments follow:
  - o Encourage the public to use less water.
  - o Conserve fresh water for the future.
  - o Use all reasonable means to expand and conserve the water supply.

o Responsibility for water resources.--Twenty-two percent of the comments proposing solutions to problems affecting water resources are in this group. The percentage of comments favoring each proposal is shown in parentheses.
  - o Give responsibility for water resources to the private sector, including farmers and other landowners (2 percent).
  - o Give this responsibility to the federal government (4 percent).
  - o Give this responsibility to state government (14 percent).
  - o Give this responsibility to state and local government jointly (19 percent).
  - o Give this responsibility to local government (15 percent).
  - o Give this responsibility to federal and state government jointly (7 percent).
  - o Give this responsibility to all levels of government (39 percent).

o Incentives for conserving water resources.--This group includes 13 percent of the comments proposing solutions to water resource problems. Selected comments follow:

- Provide additional funds for use at the local level.
- Provide more funds for water resource activities in general.
- Provide more technical assistance.
- Encourage participation in conservation programs by offering incentives.
- Get water conservation measures applied by using incentives.
- Make the farmer's welfare a primary objective in designing conservation programs.

o Research and education needs.--Ten percent of the comments offering solutions to problems affecting water resources fall in this group. Selected comments are shown below:

- Encourage studies, research, and development on water resources.
- Bring water resource needs to the attention of the public.
- Encourage research in water resource management.

o Efficiency of water resource conservation efforts.--This group contains 17 percent of the comments proposing solutions to water resource problems. Selected comments are shown below:

- Eliminate duplication and conflicts in interagency and intra-agency programs.
- Tailor the solution to local resource problems and local conditions.
- Base allocations on local resource conditions.
- Organize USDA and USDI along functional lines.
- Ensure more accountability and control in water resource activities.
- Encourage increased efficiency of irrigation systems.
- Let improvements in water resources be the result of efforts to achieve other objectives.
- Give more emphasis to economics in planning water resource projects.
- Cooperate with EPA more fully.
- Solve the worst water resource problems first.
- Put greater emphasis on irrigation system maintenance.

o Regulation.--This group includes 8 percent of the comments proposing solutions to water resource problems. Selected comments are shown below:

- Keep water resource programs voluntary.
- Restrict the entry of pesticides and herbicides into lakes and streams.
- Require landusers to comply with sediment control ordinances.
- Improve the enforcement of water conservation laws.
- Prohibit using landfills to dispose of contaminated wastes.
- Outlaw dry wells for sewage disposal.

o Improving water resources management.--This group contains 19 percent of the comments proposing solutions to water resource problems. Selected comments follow:

- Recognize that drainage is a beneficial conservation practice.
- Give greater emphasis to streambank stabilization.
- Encourage building more water storage.
- Improve the delivery of water to farms and rural communities.
- Improve the effectiveness and safety of pesticides and herbicides.

- o Use conservation practices to solve nonpoint pollution problems.
- o Encourage the use of waste management systems to reduce water pollution.
- o Protect streams from soil erosion and pollution.

[Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 50 percent said a shortage of water for homes, farms, businesses, and industry is likely or somewhat likely in the next 10 years. Forty percent said that this is somewhat unlikely or very unlikely. Ninety-one percent said water pollution is a very serious or somewhat serious problem. Six percent said it is hardly a problem at all, and 3 percent were not sure.]

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Resources

Comments on fish and wildlife resources fall into the following categories: importance of fish and wildlife resources, problems associated with these resources, proposed solutions to resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of fish and wildlife resources	706	31
Problems associated with fish and wildlife	269	12
Proposed solutions to resource problems	313	14
Other comments	1,019	43
Total	2,307	100

Importance of fish and wildlife habitat resources.--The comments on importance fall into three groups--high, medium or low--according to the respondents' perceptions of the value of the resource. "High general rating," and "favor practices which serve fish and wildlife resources" are examples of comments that fall into the "high" ranking. Examples of "medium" comments are "cropland is more important than wetland" and "medium general rating." "Should not be a principal objective in soil and water conservation programs" and "very low general rating" are examples of comments in the "low" group. The ranking follows:

Ranking	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
High	486	69
Medium	36	5
Low	184	26
Total	706	100

Problems related to fish and wildlife habitat resources.--The respondents identify two kinds of problems: those related to fish and wildlife resources

and those associated with the RCA documents. Examples of problems associated with fish and wildlife resources are "wetlands and wet soils need a clearer definition," "biased toward urban people, noncommercial agriculture, environmentalists," "not enough water to satisfy all the needs for agriculture, fisheries, and power," and "water for cropland irrigation is more important than for wildlife habitat." The distribution of these comments follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Fish and wildlife resources	117	43
RCA documents	152	57
Total	269	100

Proposed solutions to fish and wildlife habitat problems.--The proposed solutions for fish and wildlife habitat problems fall into several groups: general policy, efficiency in government, responsibility, incentives, and farm management.

o General policy.--This group accounts for 49 percent of the comments proposing solutions to fish and wildlife habitat problems. Selected comments follow:
  - o Conservation practices are the best approach to improving fish and wildlife habitat.
  - o Conservation of fish and wildlife habitat should be a long term policy.
  - o Establish better communication between agricultural and wildlife interests.
  - o Inform and educate the public on fish and wildlife habitat improvement.

o Efficiency in government.--This group accounts for 15 percent of the comments for solving fish and wildlife problems. Selected comments are:
  - o Eliminate duplication.
  - o Administer current programs more effectively through existing agencies.
  - o Encourage better management and more effective communication and cooperation among individuals, businesses, and government agencies.

o Responsibility for fish and wildlife habitat.--Fourteen percent of the comments are in this group. Selected comments follow:
  - o Give responsibility to state and local government.
  - o Give responsibility to the private sector (landowner), and leave the farmers in control.
  - o Give the responsibility to the state.

o Incentives for improving fish and wildife habitat.--This group accounts for 22 percent of the comments offering solutions to fish and wildlife problems. Selected comments are:
  - o Increase subsidies.
  - o Provide tax incentives.
  - o Establish fines for poor conservation.

[Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 68 percent said that shortages of good fish and wildlife habitat are very likely to somewhat likely within the next 10 years. Eighty-four percent considered the loss of wildlife habitat to be a very serious to somewhat serious problem.]

Wetlands

Comments on wetlands fall into categories as follows: importance of wetlands, problems associated with wetlands, solutions to wetland resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of wetlands	131	19
Problems associated with wetlands	130	19
Proposed solutions to wetlands problems	299	42
Other comments	142	20
Total	702	100

Importance of wetlands as a resource.--The following list shows the respondents' perception of the importance of wetlands. Comments fall into three groups--high, medium, or low. "Steps toward conservation and protection deserve immediate attention" is an example of comments in the "high" group. "Should be maintained at present levels, no change" is representative of the "medium" group. The "low" ranking includes "should be decreased," "very low rating," and similar comments.

Ranking	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
High	46	35
Medium	11	8
Low	74	57
Total	131	100

Problems related to wetlands.--Respondents identify two kinds of problems: those relating to wetlands as a resource and those associated with the RCA documents. Examples of resource problems are "wet soils used for cropland and wetlands used for wildlife habitat are in direct conflict," "environmentalists' concerns force farmers into bad financial situations," "drainage is good and needed," and "preservation of wetlands should not be a principal objective in soil and water conservation programs." The distribution of these comments follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Wetlands	37	28
RCA documents	93	72
Total	130	100

Proposed solutions to problems on wetlands.--Comments proposing solutions to wetlands problems fall into three main groups: general policy, incentives, and management.

o General policy.--This group accounts for 80 percent of the comments on proposed solutions to wetlands problems. Following are selected comments:
  - o Drain borderline wetlands where more farmland is needed to feed increased population, or increase farming efficiency.
  - o Define wetlands more clearly.
  - o Devise a better wetland inventory. Classify only marshes and swamps, and concentrate on preserving wetlands that have not been farmed 3 out of the last 5 years.
  - o Control and preserve wetlands through education.
  - o Put more emphasis on study and research.
  - o Preserve wetlands through public ownership.

o Incentives for preservation of wetlands.--Comments on incentives account for 18 percent of the comments on solutions. Selected comments follow:
  - o Add more funds to the field and local levels.
  - o Program should be voluntary.
  - o Add more technical assistance.
  - o Use tax incentives.
  - o Compensate the landowners.

o Farm management solutions for wetlands problems.--Seven percent of the comments offering solutions to problems on wetlands are in this category. Selected comments are:
  - o Use land within its capability, to its highest and best use.
  - o Build more lakes, levees, and ponds.

Energy Resources

Comments on this topic fall into the following categories: importance of energy resources, problems associated with energy resources, proposed solutions to resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of energy resources-----	276	20
Problems associated with energy resources----------	215	16
Proposed solutions to resource problems----------	588	43
Other----------	298	21
Total----------	1,377	100

Importance of energy resources.--The list below shows the respondents' perceptions of the importance of energy resources. Rankings are based on combinations of comments assigning a value to this resource. Comments that fall into the "high" group include "give immediate attention to conserving and protecting this resource." The "medium" ranking includes comments such as "maintain energy resources at their present level." "Very low general rating for energy resources" falls in the "low" group.

Ranking	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
High	212	77
Medium	23	8
Low	41	15
Total	276	100

Problems related to energy resources.--The respondents identify problems concerning energy resources and problems associated with the RCA documents. Examples of comments on resource problems are "hard for farmers to decrease energy use while at the same time increasing farm production," "too expensive," and "not enough water for agriculture and other uses (power production)." Comments on problems with the content of the RCA documents include those concerning missing information or erroneous data. Comments on problems are summarized below:

Problems related to--	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Energy resources	47	22
RCA documents	168	78
Total	215	100

Proposed solutions to energy problems.--Comments concerning proposed solutions to resource problems fall into three groups: energy conservation, responsibility for energy resources, and education and research needs. These comments are listed below.

o Energy conservation.--This group accounts for 44 percent of the comments proposing solutions to problems affecting energy resources. Selected comments follow:

- o Redirect funds now spent on importing oil to developing the Nation's energy resources.
- o Make farms and areas energy independent.
- o Encourage farmers to produce gasohol.
- o Use forest biomass for energy production.
- o Manage forests for firewood.
- o Emphasize alternative sources of energy.
- o Conserve energy resources for future use.

o Responsibility for energy resources.--Twenty-seven percent of the comments proposing solutions to energy resource problems are in this group. Selected comments follow:

- o Give responsibility for energy resources to other than USDA agencies.
- o Give responsibility for energy resources to state and local government.
- o Eliminate duplication of energy resource responsibilities between USDA and DOE.
- o Eliminate duplication of energy resource responsibilities among USDA agencies.

o Incentives for conservation of energy resources.--Seven percent of the comments proposing solutions to energy resource problems are in this category. Selected comments follow:

- o Give a bonus to landusers for inventive approaches to energy resource conservation.
- o Encourage energy resource conservation through a high rate of cost sharing assistance.
- o Provide subsidies for energy resource conservation.
- o Increase funding for energy resources.
- o Reinstate cost sharing on selected ACP practices.

o Education and research needs.--Twenty-two percent of the comments proposing solutions to energy problems are in this group. Selected comments follow:

- o Conduct additional research and development on energy resource conservation and energy saving conservation methods.
- o Control conservation of energy resources through education.

[Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 81 percent said the Nation is likely or somewhat likely to suffer a shortage of gasoline and oil within the next 10 years. Forty-nine percent said that gasohol could help reduce oil imports in the next 5 years.]

Waste (Organic, Inorganic, Solid)

Comments on waste fall into categories as follows: importance of waste as a resource, problems associated with the resource, solutions to resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of waste as a resource--	53	13
Problems associated with the resource----------	85	20
Proposed solutions to resource problems----------	273	65
Other comments----------	11	2
Total----------	422	100

Importance of waste as a resource.--The comments on importance fall into three groups: high, medium, and low. "Increase or expand" and "waste management systems help" are examples of comments in the "high" ranking. "Neutral" and "should be maintained" are examples of comments in the "medium" ranking. The "low" ranking includes comments such as "generally opposed" or "disagree." The distribution of the comments follows:

Ranking	Number of comments
High----------	41
Medium----------	1
Low----------	11
Total----------	53

Perceived problems relating to waste.--Respondents identify two kinds of problems--those relating to waste as a resource and those associated with the

RCA documents. Examples of comments on the problems associated with waste are "laws are not adequate" and "industry and big business are responsible for the problem." The distribution of these comments follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments
Waste as a resource	26
RCA documents	59
Total	85

Proposed solutions to resource problems.--Comments concerning the proposed solutions to waste resource problems are grouped into the following categories: general policy, incentives, and farm management. These comments are listed below.

o General policy.--This group accounts for 82 percent of the comments proposing solutions to waste related problems. Selected comments follow:
  - o Dispose of hazardous waste properly.
  - o Include animal waste disposal systems in FmHA loan application.
  - o Control waste through a stepped-up program of education and training.
  - o Add more technical assistance.
  - o Emphasize production of energy from alternative sources, including organic waste.
  - o Need more research and development.
  - o Encourage a policy of waste not and use less.
  - o Recycle solid waste--plastics, metals, and others.

o Incentives for using waste material.--Incentives account for 8 percent of the comments offering solutions. Selected comments follow:
  - o Increase funding.
  - o More control, enforcement, and accountability are needed.

o Farm management solutions for using waste as a resource.--Ten percent of the comments proposing solutions to waste related problems are in this category. Selected comments follow:
  - o Produce gasohol from garbage, manure, and other wastes.
  - o Use organic fertilizer to build up the land.
  - o Leave organic residue to build up the land, provide cover for wildlife, and retain moisture.
  - o Produce fertilizer from raw sewage and use it to reclaim strip mines and to fertilize agricultural land.

Outdoor Recreation

Comments on this topic are grouped as follows: importance of the resource, problems associated with the resource, solutions offered by respondents, and other comments. The distribution of these comments is shown in the following list.

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of the resource	41	25
Problems associated with the resource	52	32
Proposed solutions to resource problems	19	12
Other	49	31
Total	161	100

Importance of outdoor recreation as a resource.--The list below shows the respondents' perception of the importance of outdoor recreation as a resource. Rankings are based on combinations of comments assigning a value to this resource. An example of a comment that falls into the "high" ranking is "deterioration of outdoor recreation resources is a serious problem which will increase in the future." The "medium" grouping includes such comments as "maintain outdoor recreation resources at their present level." "A very low general rating for outdoor recreation resources" is representative of the "low" group.

Ranking	Number of comments
High	25
Medium	5
Low	11
Total	41

Problems related to outdoor recreation resources.--The respondents identify problems related to outdoor recreation resources and problems with the RCA documents. An example of a comment on resource problems is "erosion is caused by hunters, recreational vehicle operators, and tourists." The distribution of comments dealing with outdoor recreation problems follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments
Outdoor recreation as a resource	19
RCA documents	33
Total	52

Proposed solutions to resource problems.--Proposed solutions to resource problems are shown below. Comments are grouped by subject matter.

o Keeping land for outdoor recreation use.--Thirty-eight percent of all comments containing proposed solutions to outdoor resource problems are in this group. Selected comments are:
  - o Regulate use of flood plains for outdoor recreation.
  - o Take no more lands for use as parks or wildlife habitat.
  - o Ensure public access to outdoor recreation lands.
  - o Prohibit posting lands where owner receives government support.
  - o Limit outdoor recreation use to lands not suitable for farming.

o Conservation practices affecting outdoor recreation use.--About 31 percent of all comments proposing solutions to resource problems are in this group. Selected comments follow:

- Control clearcutting.
- Promote the building of small embankment lakes.
- Prohibit the building of unneeded dams.

o Efficiency in promoting conservation.--This group includes about 31 percent of all comments offering solutions to problems associated with outdoor recreation. Selected comments are:

- Encourage research and development in outdoor recreation.
- Ensure more control over outdoor recreation resources.
- Tax hunters for wildlife habitat improvement.
- Locate development for outdoor recreation where use will require less travel.

[Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 58 percent said that a shortage of lakes and rivers suitable for recreation use is very likely or somewhat likely within the next 10 years.]

Open Space and Scenic Landscapes

Comments on open space and scenic landscapes are grouped into the following areas: importance of the resources, problems associated with the resources, solutions offered by respondents, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of the resources	36	24
Problems associated with the resources	55	37
Proposed solutions to resource problems	51	34
Other comments	7	5
Total	149	100

Importance of the resources.--The following list shows the respondents' perception of the importance of open space and scenic landscapes. Rankings are based on combinations of comments assigning a value to this resource. An example of a comment in the "high" group is "protect open space and scenic landscapes from irreversible and harmful uses." "Maintain open space and scenic landscape resources at their present level" falls in the "medium" group. "A low general rating of open space and scenic landscapes" is a comment in the "low" group.

Ranking	Number of comments
High	30
Medium	2
Low	4
Total	36

Problems related to open space and scenic landscapes.--The comments identify problems related to this resource and problems with the RCA documents. An

example of a problem with open space and scenic landscapes resources is "open space and scenic landscape concerns are biased toward urban people." Problems with the RCA documents involve information left out or thought to be in error. The distribution of these comments follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments
Open space and scenic landscapes---	13
RCA documents----------	42
Total----------	55

Proposed solutions to resource problems.--Comments concerning proposed solutions to resource problems are in the following groups: open space, scenic natural areas, and responsibility. Selected comments follow:

o Open space.--This group includes 18 percent of the comments proposing solutions to problems concerning this resource topic. Selected comments follow:
  - o Make setaside programs permanent.
  - o Take no more land for use as parks.
  - o Control urban sprawl.
  - o Encourage the use of streambelt corridors.

o Protect and enhance scenic natural areas.--Seventy-eight percent of the comments proposing solutions to problems on open space and scenic landscapes are in this group. Selected comments follow:
  - o Beautify highways by planting hardy trees.
  - o Control erosion along highways and streams.
  - o Control clearcutting.
  - o Promote clearing and snagging instead of channelization.
  - o Protect scenic woodland areas.
  - o Preserve wilderness areas.
  - o Encourage building of impoundment lakes.
  - o Prohibit development in scenic areas.
  - o Maintain water quality and streamflow.
  - o Consider scenic values before permitting site development.

o Responsibility.--Four percent of all comments proposing solutions to problems on open space and scenic landscapes say that state government should have responsibility for this resource.

[Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 56 percent said that it is very likely or somewhat likely that a shortage of pleasant views of scenic landscapes will occur within 10 years.]

All Natural Resources

The coding category "All natural resources" includes comments that refer to resources in general. Comments on this topic fall into the following categories: importance of the resources, problems associated with the resources, solutions to resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of the resources	963	45
Problems associated with the resources	314	15
Proposed solutions to resource problems	362	17
Other	490	23
Total	2,129	100

Importance of the resources.--The following list shows respondents' perception of the importance of all natural resources. Rankings are based on combinations of comments that place a value on the resource. "Conservation of all natural resources is our first priority" is an example of a comment in the "high" group. "Medium general rating of all natural resources" is representative of the "medium" group. The "low" group includes comments such as "very low general rating of all natural resources."

Ranking	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
High	920	96
Medium	14	1
Low	29	3
Total	963	100

Problems concerning all natural resources.--The respondents identify problems related to all natural resources and problems associated with the RCA documents. Examples of comments on resources are "concern with all natural resources puts too many controls and expenses on landowners" and "concern with all natural resources will act as a disincentive to farm production." Comments on RCA document problems express concern over information left out or judged to be in error. The distribution of these comments follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Resource problems	169	54
RCA documents	145	46
Total	314	100

Proposed solutions to resource problems.--Comments proposing solutions to resource problems are displayed in this section. Comments are grouped according to subject.

o Responsibility.--Seven percent of the comments proposing solutions to resource problems are contained in this group. Selected comments follow:
  - o Give responsibility for all natural resources to the federal government.
  - o Give responsibility for all natural resources to local government.
  - o Give responsibility for all natural resources to all levels of government.
  - o The government should share responsibility for all natural resources with the landowners.

o Program emphasis needed.--Seven percent of all comments dealing with solutions to all natural resource problems are contained in this group. Selected comments follow:
  - o Prevent conversion of woodland to other land uses.
  - o Emphasize streambank stabilization.
  - o Restrict urban development.
  - o Prevent mining of ground water.
  - o Expand urban forestry programs.

o Efficiency.--Twenty-four percent of all comments proposing solutions to all natural resource problems are in this group. Selected comments follow:
  - o Support a "waste not-want not" philosophy.
  - o Localize the approach for solving resource problems.
  - o Encourage more research and development on all natural resources.
  - o Establish conservation policy on a long term basis.
  - o Relocate unnecessary state and national USDA employees to the local level.
  - o Improve long range planning by establishing minimum funding levels for each conservation program.
  - o Evaluate cost effectiveness of conservation programs.
  - o Decrease government involvement and interference.

o Incentives.--Thirty-eight percent of all comments proposing solutions to all natural resource problems are in this group. Selected comments follow:
  - o Increase funding for all natural resources.
  - o Use a variety of incentives to increase participation in conservation programs.
  - o Let the public share costs of conservation.
  - o Encourage conservation of these resources through education.
  - o Encourage motivation for conservation through the use of local input.
  - o Encourage more conservation through higher farm profits.

o Regulation.--Twenty-four percent of the comments proposing solutions to all natural resource problems are in this group. Selected comments follow:
  - o Ensure that all natural resources conservation programs are voluntary.
  - o Take into account natural pollution levels when setting standards.
  - o Consider that private ownership and government controls are not compatible.
  - o Saline seeps are a major conservation problem.

Other Resources

The resources that are included in this section are forest land, rangeland, air, and other resources not covered by the more specific topics. Comments are in the following categories: importance of the resources, problems associated with the resources, proposed solutions to resource problems, and other comments. The distribution of these comments follows:

Category	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Importance of the resources	442	31
Problems associated with the resources	259	18
Proposed solutions to resource problems	345	24
Other comments	389	27
Total	1,435	100

Importance of other resources.--The comments on importance fall into three groups--high, medium, and low. An example of a comment in the "high" group is "conservation is needed and is in the best interest of the public." "Neutral" and "should be maintained" are examples of comments in the "medium" ranking. The "low" ranking includes comments like "disagree, object." The following list shows the respondents' perceptions of the importance of other resources:

Ranking	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
High	413	93
Medium	17	4
Low	12	3
Total	442	100

Problems associated with other resources.--The respondents identify problems related to forest land, range, air, and other resources and problems associated with the RCA documents. Examples of comments on resource problems are: "Saline seeps are a major conservation problem," "USDA should provide continuity to integrate all programs," "farmers need economic information as well as conservation information," and "environmental concerns and high productivity are not compatible." The distribution of these comments follows:

Problems related to--	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Other resources	64	25
RCA documents	195	75
Total	259	100

Selected comments on other resource problems are:

- Laws are not adequate. They need more teeth.
- Need program to control insects and animals.
- Environmentalists' concerns force farmers into a bad financial situation.

Proposed solutions to resource problems.--Comments concerning proposed solutions to resource problems are displayed in this section.

o General policy.--This group accounts for 65 percent of the comments proposing solutions. Selected comments follow:

- Control problems through research and education.
- Support a "waste not and use less" philosophy.
- Make conservation a long term policy.

- Adopt worthwhile conservation measures and national conservation goals and objectives.
- Protect air from pollution.
- The farmer should make conservation decisions.
- Programs should be voluntary.
- Oppose uniform national standards.
- Protect woodlands, properly manage forests, and make firewood a by-product of forest stand management.
- Emphasize alternative energy sources and study energy conservation methods.
- Provide more technical assistance.

- Incentives for conservation of other resources.--This group accounts for 35 percent of the comments proposing solutions. Selected comments are:
  - Promote management of forest land through local assistance, tax incentives, or cost sharing.
  - Increase funding for conservation.
  - Implement stronger enforcement laws.
  - Penalize the nonconserver.
  - Compensate the landowner for extra cost attributed to conservation practices.

Summary

Relatively few respondents comment directly on resource status, condition, and trends. Comments that deal with resources show a deep appreciation of all soil, water, and related resources. Many comments reflect a good understanding of resource status and trends.

Concern for individual resources can be ranked according to the number of comments addressed to each. On this basis, the resources covered in this chapter assume the following order: water, soil, fish and wildlife habitat, all natural resources, other resources, energy, wetlands, waste, recreation, and open space. Respondents express a strong concern over the capacity of resources to meet increasing future demands. Increased incentives are proposed as a means of expanding conservation efforts to sustain resources in the years ahead.

Respondents are in fairly close agreement with USDA's perception of resource problems as set forth in the RCA documents. Many comments tend to focus on local or even personal needs. Proposed solutions are based almost universally on expanding or improving the efficiency of traditional conservation programs. A limited number of comments reflect conflicting resource demands. For example, most of those commenting on wetlands say that they disagree with the objective to stop net loss of wetlands to agricultural uses.

Chapter 5 - Conservation Objectives Related to Resource Problems

This chapter summarizes the nature and substance of public comments that relate to the conservation objectives presented in chapter 3, section B, of the draft of the RCA Program Report and Environmental Impact Statement and in part IV of the Summary. This chapter examines the interested public's--

- o perception of the significance and priority of the objectives.
- o reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the stated objectives.
- o judgment about whether the objectives actually address existing resource problems.
- o suggestions for expanding or altering the stated objectives.

This chapter presents information to help decisionmakers judge probable public acceptance of the alternative proposed objectives.

The Scope of the Response

Of the 64,872 responses analyzed in this report, over 64 percent (41,703) contain at least one comment that deals with the proposed conservation objectives. These responses include more than 577,000 comments which relate to one or more of the 20 objectives discussed in this chapter. These comments arrived in the following response types: structured response form--94 percent; personal letter--3 percent; petition, form letter, resolution--2 percent; nonstructured response form--1 percent; transcript, other, or unknown--less than 0.2 percent.

Regionally, responses come mostly from the South and Midwest. Of the 41,703 responses addressing conservation objectives, 42 percent come from the South, 35 percent from the Midwest, 12 percent from the West, and 11 percent from the Northeast. Of the over 577,000 comments, 43 percent are from the South, 37 percent from the Midwest, 12 percent from the West, and 8 percent from the Northeast.

The distribution of responses by respondent type varies slightly among regions, but it corresponds closely to the national pattern. The percentage of responses made by selected respondent types in each region is:

Respondent type	Northeast	South	West	Midwest	National
Individuals----------	64	62	55	58	60
Local government-------	21	21	27	27	24
Federal government-----	7	11	11	10	10
State government-------	3	3	2	2	2
Farm organizations-----	2	1	1	1	2
Environmental groups---	3	1	1	2	1
All others------------	1	2	3	1	1

Note: Columns may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

The percentage of comments made by each respondent type in each region is:

Respondent type	Northeast	South	West	Midwest	National
Individuals	43	55	43	51	51
Local government	33	25	34	31	29
Federal government	11	13	14	11	12
State government	4	3	3	2	3
Farm organizations	3	2	1	2	2
Environmental groups	4	1	2	2	2
All others	1	1	2	1	1

Note: Columns may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

Comparison of the distribution of responses and distribution of comments shows that local and federal government respondents made more comments per response than did individuals. The affiliation of many of the individuals who commented on the objectives cannot be ascertained. Of the 12,344 (less than half) individuals whose affiliation can be identified, the distribution is: farmer or rancher--79 percent; professional--10 percent; houseperson--8 percent; student--2 percent; all others--1 percent.

Of the responses coded to local government units, 8,995 (over nine-tenths) can be identified by affiliation of respondent. About 75 percent of these come from soil conservation districts. Another 1 percent represent other units of local government, such as townships or municipalities. Although ASC county committees are not units of local government, 24 percent of the responses coded to local government come from ASC county committee members.

The affiliation of only 352 (less than one-tenth) of the federal government respondents can be identified. This number is low because many respondents who used structured response forms when asked for affiliation simply checked the line for "federal government" and provided no further information. The 352 respondents from the federal government who did specify agency represent: Soil Conservation Service--48 percent; Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service--15 percent; Farmers Home Administration--8 percent; Forest Service--7 percent; other USDA agencies--14 percent; other federal government (non USDA) units--8 percent.

General Trends

The proposed soil and water conservation objectives for the seven resource areas of concern are divided, for coding, into 21 topics. The large number of comments about these topics shows that the public views objectives as important issues. A list of the 21 topics, the number of comments about each, and the number of signatures represented are presented in table 5-1. Only three topics received less than 25,000 comments each. A large majority of the comments arrived on printed forms, such as the one distributed by the National Association of Conservation Districts. Because some of these forms did not contain questions about the objectives to maintain soil quality and improve rangeland fewer comments were received concerning these topics.

Table 5-1.--Comments and signatures on conservation objectives

Conservation objective	Number of-- Comments	Signatures 1/
Reduce soil erosion	38,397	63,862
Maintain soil quality	6,013	7,933
Improve rangeland	4,862	5,675
Retain prime farmland	39,174	65,006
Reduce toxic pollutants	31,997	55,159
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste	27,808	50,301
Minimize nutrient pollution	29,750	51,504
Reduce salinity	25,168	41,330
Reduce sediment	30,022	52,645
Increase irrigation efficiency	30,911	50,350
Maximize water supplies	27,423	50,004
Reduce loss of wetlands	35,924	57,034
Increase instream flows	27,913	46,026
Improve wildlife habitat	30,684	50,799
Reduce flood damage	33,033	57,382
Flood prevention project priority	28,004	46,040
Reduce energy use	30,962	53,932
Increase energy production	31,000	53,776
Use organic waste	30,483	53,635
Urban area conservation	29,556	49,962
Other/all objectives	8,798	13,294
Total	577,882	(2/)

1/ This figure represents the signatures associated with each comment. Thus, if a letter with one signature makes 3 different comments about an objective, as 3 signatures are shown in this table.

2/ The total is not meaningful because a signature may relate to one or more objectives.

The comments indicate considerable support for the conservation objectives. Favorable comments are made more frequently than are unfavorable comments for each of the objectives. Support is greatest for those objectives dealing with agricultural conservation, such as "Reduce soil erosion." Fewer respondents voice support for objectives dealing with nature conservation, such as "Reduce loss of wetlands." Overall, support appears to be greatest for the objectives that address traditional USDA concerns. Support is expressed less often for the objectives that address issues that have traditionally been the province of other departments (such as the Department of the Interior). Many comments appear to reflect general feelings about broad issues (such as energy use and production) rather than a specific position on a specific objective (such as reduce energy use per unit of agricultural output).

Some of the comments may have been influenced to an unknown degree by the wording of the structured response form used, or by the way the objective was presented to the respondent. For example, the water conservation objective was worded "minimize water use" on one widely-used structured form and was stated as "increase the efficiency of water use" on another form. A person in favor of "increasing efficiency" could be strongly opposed to "minimizing use." "Minimize water use" has connotations of regulation and government control of individual rights, while "increase water use efficiency" suggests only utilizing improved technology and methods.

The objective concerning wetlands was also affected by the wording. Many structured forms stated the objective as "stop wetland conversion." A large number of respondents indicated strong opposition to stopping wetland conversion, but suggested they would support the objective if it were changed to "minimize wetland conversion." The word "stop" may account, in part, for the relatively large number of comments expressing opposition to this objective.

A high proportion of responses are structured response forms, which feature checklists for indications of agreement or priority ranking. Because of this, most comments about each objective simply express an opinion ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (over 70 percent of the comments for most objectives) or place a priority ranking on the objective (over 10 percent of the comments for most objectives). Table 5-2 shows the proportion of comments expressing a range of agreement or disagreement with each objective. Table 5-3 shows the proportion of comments that place a general rating (priority) on each objective. Because structured forms asking the respondent to place a priority on each objective were used primarily in the South, almost 92 percent of the comments regarding priority are from the South. The general priority ratings in table 5-3, therefore, may be more representative of respondents' opinions in the South than in the Nation as a whole.

Priority Among the Conservation Objectives

A higher percentage of the comments on each objective approve of the objective than disapprove of it. The level of approval, however, is not the same for all objectives (see fig. 5-1). In table 5-4, the objectives are ranked in terms of the support for the objective, the opposition to the objective, and the percentage of comments that are neutral.

The percentage of comments expressing agreement is highest for the objective of reducing soil erosion (64 percent strongly agree and 32 percent agree) and lowest for the objective of reducing loss of wetlands (21 percent strongly agree and 27 percent agree).

The percentage of comments expressing disagreement is highest for the objective of reducing the loss of wetlands (12 percent strongly disagree and 21 percent disagree). It is lowest for the objective to reduce soil erosion (1

Table 5-2.--Comments expressing agreement or disagreement with conservation objectives, percentage distribution

Conservation objective	Percent 1/					Total number of comments
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Reduce soil erosion----------	64	32	1	2	1	27,973
Maintain soil quality 2/-------	28	65	1	5	1	1,418
Improve range-land 2/----------	27	61	3	8	1	992
Retain prime farmland---------	54	38	4	3	2	27,712
Reduce toxic pollutants-------	41	44	7	5	3	26,365
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste------------	26	52	12	7	3	25,624
Minimize nutrient pollution--------	23	53	14	7	3	25,018
Reduce salinity----	23	50	22	4	2	22,209
Reduce sediment----	36	49	10	3	2	24,802
Increase irrigation efficiency-------	22	44	18	11	4	24,978
Maximize water supplies---------	38	47	9	3	2	25,449
Reduce loss of wetlands---------	21	27	19	21	12	25,643
Increase instream flows------------	20	42	25	9	4	22,909
Improve wildlife habitat----------	32	41	15	7	4	25,733
Reduce flood damage-----------	39	47	8	4	2	26,516
Flood prevention project priority-	31	42	16	8	4	22,657
Reduce energy use--	35	47	9	7	2	25,824
Increase energy production-------	45	44	7	3	1	25,502

Table 5-2.--Comments expressing agreement or disagreement with conservation objectives, percentage distribution--Continued

Conservation objective	Percent 1/					Total number of comments
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Use organic waste--	41	49	7	2	1	25,724
Urban area conservation------	38	44	10	5	2	24,922
Other/all objectives 2/-----	17	74	1	7	2	1,890

1/ Total for each objective may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.
2/ The number of comments made about this objective is extremely small compared to the number made about other objectives because the most frequently used structured forms did not contain questions about this objective. It may be inappropriate to compare these percentages with those of other objectives.

Table 5-3.--Comments placing a general rating or priority on conservation objectives, percentage distribution

Conservation objective	Oppose	Support 1/					Total number of comments
		Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	
Reduce soil erosion-----	*	2	2	6	18	72	4,545
Maintain soil quality---	*	2	4	12	30	52	3,390
Improve rangeland-------	*	4	8	21	31	36	3,111
Retain prime farmland---	*	4	4	10	18	64	6,428
Reduce toxic pollutants-	*	6	7	15	23	49	3,431
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste 2/---	1	6	11	18	22	42	472
Minimize nutrient pollution----------	*	7	9	21	27	36	3,276
Reduce salinity 2/-------	1	2	9	13	29	45	376
Reduce sediment----------	*	6	7	18	27	42	3,358
Increase irrigation efficiency----------	1	4	6	17	25	47	3,486
Maximize water supplies 2/----------	11	4	14	20	27	25	426
Reduce loss of wetlands--	2	11	10	20	22	36	6,244
Increase instream flows--	1	12	12	23	25	27	3,021
Improve wildlife habitat-	1	11	11	18	19	40	3,133
Reduce flood damage------	1	7	7	15	25	45	3,583
Flood prevention project priority-------	1	6	6	16	22	48	3,318
Reduce energy use--------	*	16	10	21	22	32	3,157
Increase energy production----------	*	5	5	16	21	53	3,432
Use organic waste--------	1	6	8	22	30	33	3,361
Urban area conservation--	1	6	7	18	25	44	3,114
Other/all objectives 2/--	6	4	4	14	23	50	80

NOTE: The vast majority (about 92 percent) of the responses represented by this table come from the South.

1/ Totals for each objective may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

2/ The number of comments made about this objective is extremely small compared to the number made about other objectives because the most frequently used structured forms did not contain questions about this objective. It may be inappropriate to compare these percentages with those of other objectives.

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Table 5-4.--Ordinal ranking of the objectives by intensity of support and opposition and by proportion of comments expressing a neutral opinion 1/

Objective	Support 2/	Oppose 3/	Neutral 4/
Reduce soil erosion	1	20	19
Maintain soil quality	10	12	20
Improve rangeland	12	10	18
Retain prime farmland	2	15	17
Reduce toxic pollutants	6	9	14
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste	13	8	8
Minimize nutrient pollution	16	6	7
Reduce salinity	17	14	2
Reduce sediment	8	17	9
Increase irrigation efficiency	18	2	4
Maximize water supplies	7	16	11
Reduce loss of wetlands	20	1	3
Increase instream flows	19	4	1
Improve wildlife habitat	14	5	6
Reduce flood damage	5	13	13
Flood prevention project priority	15	3	5
Reduce energy use	11	7	12
Increase energy production	3	18	15
Use organic waste	4	19	16
Urban area conservation	9	11	10

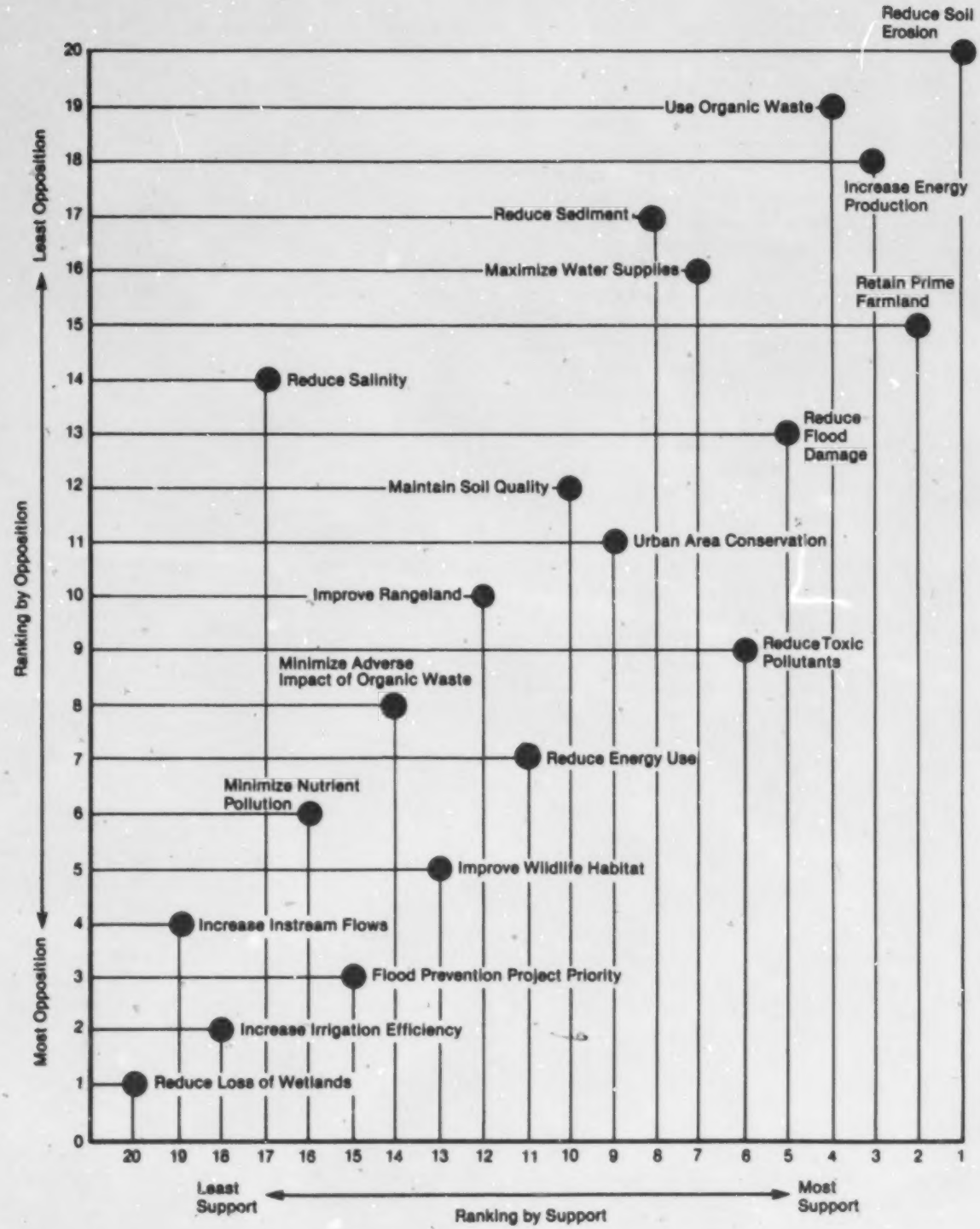
1/ This weighted ranking was calculated from table 5-2. "Strongly agree" was given twice the weight of "agree," and "strongly disagree" received twice the weight of "disagree." This weighting has no significant effect on the ranking order.

2/ From greatest support (1) to least support (20). Although ranked 20th, the objective to reduce loss of wetlands has more support than opposition (48 percent "agree" or "strongly agree" and 33 percent "disagree" or "strongly disagree").

3/ From greatest opposition (1) to least opposition (20).

4/ From largest proportion of "neutral" responses (1) to least (20).

Figure 5-1. – Conservation Objectives Ranked by Relative Support and Opposition



percent strongly disagree and 2 percent disagree). The proportion of neutral comments ranges from a high of 25 percent to a low of 1 percent.

Comparing the rankings of agreement with rankings of disagreement shows a clear pattern. Objectives that receive high support and relatively low opposition are:

- Reduce soil erosion.
- Increase the use or value of organic wastes.
- Increase energy production on agricultural land.
- Retain prime and unique farmland.
- Reduce upstream flood damage.
- Maximize water supplies.
- Reduce sediment.

Objectives that are opposed by a relatively high percentage of comments and supported by a relatively low percentage include:

- Reduce loss of wetlands.
- Increase the efficiency of water use in agriculture.
- Increase instream water flow.
- Improve terrestrial wildlife habitat.
- Minimize pollution from nutrients.
- Minimize adverse effects of organic wastes.
- Give top priority to preventing flooding of wetlands and farmland.

Objectives that receive a middle range level of support and also a middle range level of opposition are:

- Reduce toxic pollutants.
- Urban area conservation.
- Improve condition of rangeland.
- Reduce energy use in agriculture.
- Maintain soil quality.

One objective does not fall within these groups and appears to be a notable departure from the patterns of support and opposition. Reduction of the levels of dissolved solids (salinity) elicits little support or opposition.

There is some regional variation in the ranking of conservation objectives. Table 5-5 shows the relative ranking of support for each objective by RCA region. Table 5-6 shows the relative ranking of opposition. As these tables show, the objectives to reduce soil erosion and retain prime farmland rank highest in support throughout the Nation, and the objectives to reduce wetland conversion and increase instream flows rank lowest. The objectives to maintain soil quality and to improve the condition of rangeland appear to be regional issues, ranking high in ordinal ranking only in the West. The objective to reduce toxic pollutants has most support in the Northeast and Midwest. The objective to reduce upstream flood damage has greatest support in the South.

Tables 5-5 and 5-6 do not show the degree of support and opposition for each individual objective in one region as compared to that in another region. Table 5-7 shows the regional distribution of comments on the objectives.

Table 5-5.--Ordinal ranking of relative support for the objectives, by RCA region 1/

Conservation objective	Northeast	South	West	Midwest
Reduce soil erosion	1	1	1	1
Maintain soil quality	12	11	2	12
Improve rangeland	17	17	3	15
Retain prime farmland	2	3	4	2
Reduce toxic pollutants	4	9	10	4
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste	13	13	16	14
Minimize nutrient pollution	15	14	18	16
Reduce salinity	16	16	15	17
Reduce sediment	9	7	11	8
Increase irrigation efficiency	18	19	14	18
Maximize water supplies	7	6	5	9
Reduce loss of wetlands	19	20	20	19
Increase instream flows	20	18	19	20
Improve wildlife habitat	14	12	17	13
Reduce flood damage	10	4	8	7
Flood prevention project priority	11	15	13	11
Reduce energy use	6	10	12	10
Increase energy production	5	2	6	3
Use organic waste	3	5	7	5
Urban area conservation	8	8	9	6

1/ The method of calculating this ranking is similar to that used for the rankings of support given in table 5-4.

Table 5-6.--Ordinal ranking of relative opposition for the objectives, by RCA region 1/

Conservation objective	Northeast	South	West	Midwest
Reduce soil erosion	18	20	19	20
Maintain soil quality	19	12	20	10
Improve rangeland	19	4	17	6
Retain prime farmland	16	13	13	19
Reduce toxic pollutants	11	6	9	11
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste	8	11	6	8
Minimize nutrient pollution	9	8	7	7
Reduce salinity	13	14	11	14
Reduce sediment	15	17	12	17
Increase irrigation efficiency	2	3	2	2
Maximize water supplies	14	15	16	15
Reduce loss of wetlands	1	1	1	1
Increase instream flows	3	7	2	3
Improve wildlife habitat	5	5	4	4
Reduce flood damage	6	16	15	13
Flood prevention project priority	4	2	8	5
Reduce energy use	7	10	5	9
Increase energy production	12	18	14	16
Use organic waste	17	19	18	18
Urban area conservation	10	9	10	12

1/ The method of calculating this ranking is similar to that used for the rankings of opposition given in table 5-4.

Table 5-7.--Percentage distribution of comments about each objective, by RCA region

Conservation objective	Northeast	South	West	Midwest
Reduce soil erosion	8	44	11	36
Maintain soil quality	3	62	12	22
Improve rangeland	1	64	15	20
Retain prime farmland	9	45	12	34
Reduce toxic pollutants	8	43	12	37
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste	8	38	11	42
Minimize nutrient pollution	7	43	13	38
Reduce salinity	8	37	12	42
Reduce sediment	8	42	13	38
Increase irrigation efficiency	7	43	14	36
Maximize water supplies	7	43	13	36
Reduce loss of wetlands	8	36	14	41
Increase instream flows	7	50	10	34
Improve wildlife habitat	7	43	12	38
Reduce flood damage	7	43	12	38
Flood prevention project priority	7	45	11	37
Reduce energy use	7	42	12	38
Increase energy production	7	43	12	38
Use organic waste	7	43	11	38
Urban area conservation	7	43	12	38
Other/all objectives	13	29	17	41
Average	8	43	12	37

One possible measure of the degree of concern about each objective in each region is the proportion of the total comments about the objective that comes from each region. Table 5-7 shows that information. If the proportion for each objective is compared with the average proportion for all objectives, it is evident, for example, that respondents from the South are more concerned (that is, made more comments) about the objectives to maintain soil quality, improve rangeland, increase instream flows, give priority to flood prevention projects, and reduce loss of farmland and less concerned about the objective to reduce conversion of wetlands than are respondents from other regions. This does not indicate the type of response (favorable or unfavorable), but does show that the objective is a concern in that region.

[In the Harris survey those sampled were asked to rank many natural resource areas, issues, and uses in order of importance. The rankings follow.

Issue	Ranking
Adequate food	1
Best farmland retained	2
Water pollution	3
Water supply	4
Energy efficiency (farming)	5
Adequate tree supply	5
Natural places	6
Flood control (rural)	6
Recreation areas	7

The following list shows how those sampled in the Harris survey said that the federal government should divide $100 among areas of resource concerns:

Issue	Number of dollars
Increasing the supply of food, lumber, and clothing	24.4
Increasing the supply of crops and farm wastes used to produce energy	18.3
Increasing the availability of water	17.1
Cleaning up streams, lakes, and rivers	14.6
Providing places for fish and wildlife to live	13.3
Reducing the damage caused by floods	12.7]

Those responding to the Harris survey rank issues related to food production highest in both the list of government action and the amount of dollars to be spent. The objectives of reducing soil erosion and retaining prime farmland also rank high in support based on comments made by RCA respondents. Ranking of other issues by those sampled in the Harris survey also seems to follow the same pattern as ranking of the objectives by RCA respondents. The exception is flood control, which was ranked low by the general public, while the objective to reduce flood damage ranked high in intensity of support among RCA respondents.

It should be noted, though, that when those responding to the Harris survey were asked to rate other issues (i.e., nonenvironmental) as well, all of the resource issues ranked low, behind such issues as "waste in government spending," "cost of food and energy," "unemployment," and "crime."

Soil Resource Objectives

Three of the proposed objectives relate to soil resources. These objectives are (1) reduce erosion on cropland, (2) maintain soil quality, and (3) improve rangeland. As table 5-2 shows, support for these objectives is extensive. Of the nearly 50,000 comments addressing the soil resource objectives, over three-fourths express agreement or strong agreement with the objectives or give them a very high or high rating.

> [The general public also exhibits a high degree of support for government efforts to conserve soil and retain prime farmland. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, about 83 percent supported government action to protect farmland from erosion and to ensure that the best farmland is not used for new houses, factories, and roads. About 11 percent said that the government should not take those actions.]

Reduce soil erosion.--Of the total comments, 38,397 are directed to soil erosion reduction as a USDA conservation objective. This high volume of comment shows significant public concern about the traditional conservation objective of reducing erosion. About 73 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 26,878 express support, 722 express opposition, and 373 are "neutral." Some 106 comments state "no opinion." Another 12 percent of the comments place a priority on the objective (see table 5-3). Of these comments, 4,083 rate the objective to reduce soil erosion a very high or high priority, 458 rate it a medium or lower priority, and 4 are "generally opposed."

The most frequent comments are (1) expressions of support for the objectives, (2) suggestions to make setaside programs permanent or long term, (3) requests for more funding in general and more funding to field-level conservation efforts, (4) suggestions that erosion reduction efforts should be addressed to worst problems first with these worst problems identified at the local level, (5) requests for more research, and (6) comments on specific practices for erosion reduction.

Expressions of support for the soil erosion reduction objective generally come from environmental organizations, federal and state government respondents, individual farmers, and local groups, such as conservation districts or soil and water conservation committees. The pattern of support is similar for all regions of the country. Four out of every five comments addressing this objective are either "strongly agree," "agree," "very high general rating," or "high general rating." Furthermore, many of the remaining fifth of the comments express support in other terms. The ratio of support is higher than that for any other conservation objective listed in the draft RCA Program Report.

There is, however, some opposition to the soil erosion reduction objective as described in the RCA documents. Less than 3 percent of the comments are "disagree" or "strongly disagree." This opposition generally comes from individuals, rather than other types of respondents. However, several farm organizations express some measure of disagreement.

A total of 202 other comments on the erosion reduction objective say that soil is the Nation's most valuable resource, express concern about erosion, or say that conservation is in the public interest.

Generally, the support for the erosion reduction objective does not focus on the objective levels described in the RCA Program Report. Comments that do address the objective levels say that the specific T values are not universally applicable and that lower values (for example, 2 tons per acre per year) might be more appropriate in some areas. One letter points out an inconsistency among the objective levels--"reach T values" for one and "approach T values" for another.

The comments reveal a preference for increased efforts on erosion reduction. Only 6 percent of this group of comments suggest a reduction in efforts. The following list shows the distribution of comments addressing the level of the Department's efforts to control erosion.

	Number of comments
Increase efforts; give more emphasis--------	393
Maintain at present level-------------------	42
Decrease efforts; give less emphasis--------	26
	461

Comments on the level of efforts to achieve the erosion reduction objective are similar to comments made about soil resources (see chapter 4).

Respondents make some 617 comments concerning funding. These comments, as shown below, indicate that the respondents view increased funding as a critical part of the efforts to reduce erosion. Respondents say that funding should be channneled to the field level for addressing the most severe, locally identified erosion problems first.

Public comments on funding	Number of comments
Increase funding----------	135
Sources of funding (see below)----------	74
Provide additional funding to field---------	235
Direct funding to worst problem first-------	148
Direct funding to participant, not state----	2
Adequately fund enforcement program---------	17
Fund agencies directly, avoid transfer------	1
Fund program based on RCA findings----------	2
Give premium funding to poorer states-------	1
Other funding----------	2
	617

The following list shows the distribution of the 74 comments on sources of funding.

	Number of comments
Raise taxes	5
Users expense, not government	26
Public consumer	13
Special tax (e.g. hunters)	3
Mostly government	18
Mostly landowner	1
Share costs 50-50	6
Other	2
	74

Some comments, such as those that suggest dividing the cost among the public or shifting the cost to the consumers, imply government as the medium for achieving this division. Other comments like "increase funding" also suggest governmental action, but are covered elsewhere.

Respondents make 1,654 comments on methods for achieving the erosion reduction objective. The traditional approaches of incentives (283 comments), financial assistance (94), technical assistance (82), education and guidelines (208), and research (290) are mentioned most often. Some comments (120) call for a voluntary program, but a few others (24) call for laws and regulations for erosion control. Another 90 comments on regulations list conditions under which regulations might be acceptable: where resource problems are most severe; where regulations are embodied in local ordinances only; where regulations operate through the market system; where laws are directed to business interests like mining, logging, and land development.

More than 350 comments suggest general methods for achieving the objectives. About two-thirds of these address the existing setaside program, suggesting that it be made permanent or long term. This relatively high frequency of comment suggests that respondents feel strongly about an enduring setaside program where the rules and requirements are relatively constant.

Other comments on methods of achieving the erosion reduction objective relate to: training (4 comments), planning (13), management (44), penalties (21), loss of benefits (10), and long term contracts (17).

There are some 786 comments on specific measures to achieve erosion reduction. Tillage methods, trees and windbreaks, permanent grass cover, drainage, and structural measures are mentioned most frequently. The most frequently made comment in this category (193 comments) concerns development of improved erosion reduction methods.

Respondents also suggest actions that might help achieve the objective. These include: planting marginal cropland to grass, establishing state technical libraries; requiring new farmers to pass a test on land resource management before being licensed to farm.

Less frequently made comments on the erosion reduction objective are included in the appendix.

Maintain soil quality.--Of the total comments, 6,013 comments address maintaining soil quality as an objective. Almost 8,000 signatures are associated with these comments. Twenty-three percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 1,316 express support, 92 express opposition, and 10 are "neutral." Another 38 state "no opinion." About 56 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,765 rate the objective to maintain soil quality a very high or high priority, 623 rate it a medium or lower priority, and 2 are generally opposed.

Of the comments that express an opinion as to the adequacy of activities to meet this objective, two-thirds say the activities are adequate. Yet, slightly more comments say that efforts to meet the objective should be increased than say efforts should be maintained at the present level.

Other frequent comments concerning soil quality are:

	Number of comments
Use fertilizer or lime for improving soil quality	56
Build soil through a stewardship ethic and a waste not-want not philosophy	109
Any program to build soil quality should be voluntary	10
Saline seeps are problems	10
Improper forestry practices cause problems	10
Pesticide use is a problem	8
The chemical industry and big business are responsible for some soil quality problems	9
Use organic fertilizer	11
More soil survey work is needed	9
More research on soils is needed	14

The greatest support for the objective to maintain soil quality comes from the West and Northeast. Opposition is greatest in the Midwest and South.

Improve rangeland.--Almost 5,000 comments concern the improvement of rangeland as a USDA conservation objective. About 20 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 873 express support, 93 express opposition, and 26 are "neutral." Another 50 comments state "no opinion." Almost 63 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,085 rate the objective to improve the condition of rangeland a very high or high priority and 426 rate it a medium or lower priority. Only 15 percent of the comments make some further explanation, recommendation, or suggestion.

Rangeland improvement ranks in the middle for both support and opposition (see table 5-4). Support for rangeland improvement comes mostly from ranchers, farmers, and local government respondents. The greatest support comes from the West, and some support also comes from Florida and the Midwest. Opposition is mainly from respondents representing state and federal governments and is greatest from the South and Midwest.

Of the comments that express an opinion of activities to improve rangeland, two out of every three say that current activities are adequate. Other comments, however, say increased effort and emphasis are needed to achieve the objective. The following list shows the number of comments addressing the level of the Department's efforts to improve rangeland.

	Number of comments
Increase efforts; more emphasis----------	66
Maintain at present level----------	29
Decrease efforts; less emphasis----------	14
	109

Several comments express concern that only fair and poor rangeland is addressed in the objective. These comments say that the conservation objective should apply to all rangeland.

Many comments are directed to overgrazed rangeland and the need for better grazing management systems. A few comments say that the RCA documents did not adequately address grazing problems on rangeland.

Some respondents indicate a need for more weed control on rangeland. Saline seeps and geologic erosion are also identified as problems requiring attention.

Some comments say that greater funding of USDA efforts on rangeland is needed to achieve the objective. Three comments express the belief that this effort is too expensive. Another three comments say that the job is very difficult to do adequately and that it may be impossible to administer. One comment suggests that the Forest Service and the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management should be involved.

The respondents make several comments on each of the traditional avenues of addressing resource problems--research, education, technical assistance, and financial assistance. They favor the voluntary approach to rangeland improvement.

Suggestions for achieving the rangeland objective include: encourage plant materials work, establish better grazing management and control systems, plant more switchgrass, provide greater economic incentives for conservation, include contracts in a coordinated long term program, and irrigate for more productive use.

Prime Farmland Objective

Of the total comments, 39,174 address retention of prime and unique farmland as a conservation objective--more comments than address any other conservation objective. Although many respondents are clearly thinking of prime farmland, much of the comment is also directed to farmland in general. Prime farmland is discussed in two places in the RCA documents--under Soil Resource Objectives and under Related Resource Problems. The respondents apparently did not separate their comments into these two areas.

The most frequent comments express agreement with or opposition to retention of prime farmland. Over 70 pecent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 25,288 express support, 1,282 express opposition, and 1,142 are "neutral." Another 245 state "no opinion." About 16 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these, 5,277 rate the objective a very high or high priority and 1,148 rate it a medium or lower priority.

Other comments say that (1) loss of prime farmland is caused by economic conditions and nonfarm speculation, (2) land should be used within its capability, (3) urban growth could be directed or guided to better protect prime farmland, and (4) added emphasis or priority is needed. Although most comments express concern about conversion of prime farmland to urban uses, one respondent complains about conversion to wilderness. As noted in table 5-2, the number of comments in support of this objective far outweighs the number in opposition. However, the opposition to retaining prime farmland is larger than the opposition to reducing soil erosion.

Retention of prime farmland is supported most heavily by respondents affiliated with the federal government, environmental groups, and farm organizations and by respondents from the Northeast. Opposition tends to be greatest from state and local government respondents. The other comments concerning farmland retention express concern over protection of private land ownership rights and the belief that this issue is not a federal responsibility.

Many respondents who support retention of prime farmland also express alarm over urban growth and sprawl. Many comments (867) say that land protection and retention should be given top priority. Some comments (165) question the wisdom of using prime farmland as homesites when the land is vital for producing food.

> [The general public sees loss of prime farmland as a serious problem. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 82 percent thought the loss of good farmland is a very serious or somewhat serious problem. Nine percent thought it is hardly a problem at all, and 9 percent were not sure. In spite of this, when asked about government action, 26 percent of those sampled in the Harris survey said that their families benefited a great deal from the federal government's efforts to help ensure that the Nation's best farmland is not used for other things, 25 percent said that their families benefited a fair amount, 21 percent just some, and 21 percent hardly at all. This may indicate (1) that the government is not doing as much as it should or (2) that those who benefit are not aware of the government's efforts.]

By a ratio of 206 to 121, comments say that the activities to retain prime farmland are adequate rather than inadequate. The comments do not address the objective levels described in the Program Report.

Water Quality Objectives

Five of the proposed objectives relate to preserving or improving water quality. These objectives, and the number of comments addressing each, are (1) reduce discharges of toxic pollutants--31,997 comments, (2) minimize the adverse impact of organic waste--27,808 comments, (3) minimize nutrient pollution--29,750 comments, (4) minimize the adverse impact of dissolved solids (salinity)--25,168 comments, and (5) reduce sediment yield--30,022 comments.

> [The general public clearly feels that preserving water quality is an appropriate job for government. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 95 percent said that the federal government should make sure that water is clean, only 3 percent said that the government should not do this, and 1 percent were not sure.
>
> The public would also appear to be receptive to more government action in the area of preserving water quality. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 23 percent said that their families benefited a great deal from the federal government's efforts to protect the quality of the Nation's rivers, streams, and lakes, 35 percent said that their families benefited a fair amount, 23 percent just some, and 16 percent hardly at all. Three percent were not sure. When these percentages are considered in relation to the 95 percent who said that preserving water quality is an appropriate government activity, it suggests that many believe the government should be doing more.]

Respondents agree with these objectives, as table 5-2 shows. For each of the water quality objectives, however, "agree" comments outnumber "strongly agree" comments, and a greater proportion of comments are neutral than for other objectives. In terms of intensity of support, the objective to reduce toxic pollutants ranks highest, followed by the objective to reduce sediment delivery. In terms of intensity of opposition, the objectives to minimize nutrient pollution and minimize adverse effects of organic waste rank highest. The objective to reduce salinity had the highest proportion of "neutral" comments (22 percent), and the objective to reduce toxic pollutants had the lowest (7 percent "neutral"). See table 5-4 for a ranking of all objectives. None of the water quality objectives is in the top five of support, but two are in the top ten.

More support for the water quality objectives is expressed by respondents affiliated with federal and state government and environmental groups than by

individuals, farm organizations, and local government. State government respondents and individuals express most support for the objective to reduce toxic pollutants. Federal government respondents show great support for this objective but express even greater support for the objective to reduce sediment yield. Regionally, respondents from the Northeast and Midwest show greater support for the objective to reduce toxic pollutants, followed by the objective to reduce sediment yield. Support for the objective to reduce toxic pollutants, while higher than for other water quality objectives, is lowest in the South and West. The other water quality objectives generally rank relatively low in all regions.

More opposition to the water quality objectives as a USDA conservation program is expressed by individuals and local government. The West shows relatively greater opposition than other regions.

Some of the comments relate to specific features of each objective and are discussed under that objective. Patterns of opinion are seen most clearly, however, if the number of comments for all five water quality objectives are compared (see table 5-8). Nearly all comments stating that the effort is useless or impractical are directed to the objective to reduce toxic discharge. This objective also elicits a larger number of comments expressing a need for more research and tougher laws and better enforcement. Comments about the level of government which should be most involved show that all objectives but "reduce sediment yield" are seen primarily as a state responsibility. Comments about the adequacy of activities are similar for all objectives (66 percent say the activities are adequate).

Two objectives, "minimize organic waste" and "minimize salinity," are seen as needing less emphasis, while the other three objectives are seen as needing more emphasis.

Reduce discharge of toxic pollutants.--Almost 32,000 comments address this objective. Over 83 percent, or 26,365, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 22,283 express support, 2,136 express opposition, and 1,946 are "neutral." Another 292 state "no opinion." Another 11 percent, or 3,431, of the comments place a general rating on the objective and are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,474 rate the objective to reduce toxic discharge as a very high or high priority, 948 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 9 are generally opposed to the objective.

Many of the other 6 percent, or 1,909, of the comments about the objective to reduce toxic discharge are listed in table 5-8.

Table 5-8.--Number of selected comments about individual water quality objectives

Comment	Reduce toxic discharge	Minimize organic waste	Minimize nutrient pollution	Minimize salinity	Reduce sediment delivery
A useless effort; impossible to administer; unnecessary; politically unacceptable---	108	22	15	15	10
The objective is difficult to evaluate; terminology is inconsistent, confusing----	27	15	11	7	8
The data are insufficient or erroneous----------	19	15	17	8	7
There are too many regulations, too much red tape; government intervention should be used only as a last resort----------	27	24	22	16	22
Tougher laws and better enforcement are needed-----	56	17	24	5	31
Compliance should be voluntary----------	7	4	4	1	4
Additional research and development are needed-----	63	26	22	14	9
Too many agencies involved; combine agencies----------	11	11	11	11	11
Avoid intra- and inter-departmental duplication; should not be part of a USDA program----------	48	44	45	15	15
Should be a federal responsibility----------	4	4	2	0	2
Should be a state responsibility----------	22	22	22	20	7
Should be a local responsibility----------	18	4	4	2	6
Should be a shared (federal, state, local) responsibility----------	4	4	4	0	5
Should be a private sector responsibility----------	2	3	3	1	3
Needs more emphasis----------	137	105	73	55	113
Needs less emphasis----------	36	232	22	186	18
Maintain the present level of activity----------	27	26	26	28	25
The proposed activities are adequate----------	210	208	213	205	198
The proposed activities are inadequate----------	106	101	100	99	106

Other significant comments include:

	Number of comments
Reduce or restrict use of pesticides	105
Comments about chemicals and the chemical industry in general	168
Develop programs to reduce nonpoint source pollution	14
The effort must be cost-effective, practical, and acceptable to the public	50
Educate the public about the need to control toxic discharge	33
Wildlife and nature preservation should have top priority	18
Consider natural pollution in setting toxic discharge standards	24
Most toxic pollutants come from nonfarm sources	27
Protect the air from pollution	27
Very concerned about toxic pollution	16
Conservation plans should be the basis for instituting Best Management Practices	13
Control disposal of toxic wastes	13
Develop a program to deal with all pollutants	15

Minimize adverse impact of organic waste.--Over 27,800 comments are directed to this objective. Over 92 percent, or 25,624, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 20,093 express support, 2,377 express opposition, and 3,154 are "neutral." Another 364 express "no opinion." Many of the other 8 percent, or 2,184, of the comments are listed in table 5-8. Other comments include:

	Number of comments
The objective should have very high or high priority	302
The objective should have medium or lower priority	163
Generally opposed to the objective	7
Increase funding, subsidize farmers' efforts	33
Consider natural pollution in setting standards	10
Comments about problems involved in animal waste storage and disposal	14
Combine the objective with one of the alternative strategies discussed in chapter 7 (15 comments suggest combining with present program)	39
Comments expressing concern about waste disposal	37
Develop programs to reduce nonpoint source pollution	10

Conflicts with other objectives----------	10
Farmers are not to blame for the problem----	12

Minimize nutrient pollution.--About 84 percent of the 29,750 comments on the objective to minimize the adverse impact of nutrient pollution are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 18,959 express support, 2,446 express opposition, and 3,613 are "neutral." About 2 percent, or 492, express "no opinion." Another 11 percent, or 3,276, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,071 rate the objective as a very high or high priority, 1,198 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 7 are generally opposed to the objective.

Many of the other 3 percent, or 964, of the comments are listed in table 5-8. Other comments include:

	Number of comments
Comments about chemicals and the chemical industry----------	11
Combine the objective with one of the alternative strategies discussed in chapter 7 (12 comments suggest combining with present programs)----------	43
The effort must be cost-effective and practical----------	8
Farmers are not the cause of the problem----	8

Minimize adverse impact of dissolved solids (reduce salinity).--Over 89 percent of the 25,168 comments on the objective to minimize the adverse impact of dissolved solids by focusing efforts on critical regions are accounted for in table 5-3. Of the comments, 16,105 express support, 1,228 express opposition, and 4,876 are "neutral." About 6 percent, or 1,666, of the comments state "no opinion." About half of the other 5 percent, or 1,293, of the comments are listed in table 5-8. Other comments include:

	Number of comments
The objective should be a very high or high priority----------	272
The objective should be a medium or lower priority----------	90
Opposed to the objective----------	5
Salt runoff from highways and saline seeps are problems----------	42
The objective does not address all related problems----------	8
The effort must be cost-effective and practical----------	7
A water rights law is needed----------	5

Reduce sediment yield.--About 83 percent, or 24,802, of the 30,022 comments on the objective to reduce sediment yield beyond the level achieved in meeting the soil erosion reduction objective are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 21,140 expresss support, 1,163 express opposition, and 2,499

are "neutral." Over 2 percent, or 678, state "no opinion." Another 11 percent, or 3,358, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,308 rate the objective as a very high or high priority, 1,044 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 6 are generally opposed to the objective.

Many of the other 4 percent, or 1,184, of the comments are listed in table 5-8. Other comments include:

	Number of comments
Combine the objective with one of the alternative strategies discussed in chapter 7 (comments were almost evenly distributed among the 7 strategies)	146
Increase funding (including employee salary)	20
Increase funding at the local level	15
Address sediment delivery from urban construction sites	44
Teach contractors proper drainage system design and implementation	21
Control nonfarm erosion (roadside, streambank, mines, etc.)	17
Control sediment yield with structural measures	18
Increase funds for cost sharing	10

Water Supply and Conservation Objectives

Two objectives address issues of water supply and conservation. These objectives are (1) to minimize irrigation water use and (2) to maximize agricultural water supplies. Support for maximizing supplies is much stronger than that for minimizing irrigation use, probably because of the potential restrictions on irrigation inherent in the latter.

[The opinion of the general public about the likelihood of a water shortage is divided. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, about 50 percent said that there is very likely or somewhat likely to be a shortage of water for homes, farms, businesses, and industry in the next 10 years, while about 46 percent said it is somewhat unlikely or very unlikely that there will be such a shortage.

The public apparently feels that they benefit from government efforts to ensure adequate water supplies. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 27 percent said they benefited a great deal from the federal government's efforts in helping to provide an adequate supply of water for the Nation's farms, homes, and businesses, 37 percent said they benefited a fair amount, and 19 percent just some. Thirteen percent said they benefited hardly at all, and 4 percent were not sure. This implies support not only for efforts to conserve and increase water supplies, but also efforts to preserve water quality. The percentage of those saying they benefit from efforts to provide

an adequate water supply is similar to the percentage of those saying that they benefit from efforts to preserve water quality.]

Minimize irrigation water use.--This overall objective includes the three elements of increasing efficiency of agricultural irrigation, limiting water conservation to selected measures in water short areas, and working through states to improve operation and maintenance of existing structures to increase instream flows. Almost 31,000 comments address minimizing water use as a USDA conservation objective. Of these, 95 percent simply indicate a position without further explanation.

Slightly over half (54 percent) of the comments indicate agreement or strong agreement with USDA adopting an objective to minimize water use. Another 8 percent assign this objective a high or very high general rating. Yet 13 percent of the comments state disagreement or strong disagreement. Another 389 comments, slightly more than 1 percent, register opposition or a low or very low general rating for this objective.

Although a majority of comments on the objective support minimizing water use as a USDA conservation objective, this objective ranks third from last in ranking of support among all objectives. Simultaneously, opposition to USDA's seeking to minimize water use yielded a very high ranking--second from the top. See table 5-4.

The greatest support for a USDA conservation objective of minimizing water use comes from individuals, local government, and environmental groups. Support is greater in the West than in other regions.

Opposition to the objective comes from farmers and local government, especially in the West where many respondents appear to feel that they would be adversely affected if the objective were achieved.

About 160 comments state that present activities are adequate to meet the objective. Another 123 say that the activities are inadequate.

About 0.5 percent of the comments address the emphasis or level of efforts that should be given to the water use objective. These 163 comments suggest that additional emphasis is needed.

	Number of comments
Increase efforts, more emphasis----------	134
Maintain at present level----------	18
Decrease efforts, less emphasis----------	11
Total----------	163

The comments stress local responsibility for water rights. Ground water control is mentioned in 48 comments, and another 11 say that greater efforts are needed to conserve water. Another 124 say that insufficient water already exists for the many competing uses and that agriculture should have top priority.

Forty-four respondents say that more research is needed. One comment recommends use of rainwater to help achieve the objective.

Maximize water supplies.--Over 27,400 comments address the objective of implementing measures to improve the reliability and availability of water for agriculture. Nearly 93 percent of the comments simply state whether the respondent agrees or disagrees with the objective (see table 5-2). Of these comments, 21,832 express support, 1,268 express opposition, and 2,349 are "neutral." Another 468 comments state "no opinion." About 2 percent of the comments place a general rating or priority on the objective (see table 5-3). Of these comments, 220 rate the objective a very high or high priority, 161 rate it a medium or lower priority, and 45 are generally opposed. About 1.5 percent of the comments address the adequacy or inadequacy of the proposed activities to meet the objective.

Of the remaining comments, a few suggest combining the objective with one of the alternative strategies discussed in chapter 7. Several others comment on the methods of maximizing water supplies, including building dams and lakes, conserving ground water, assigning riparian rights, and improving water delivery. In contrast, one respondent from South Carolina states that "in our area . . . an excess of water is more of a problem than a shortage." Other comments relate to funding or cost.

As table 5-2 shows, the great majority of the respondents support this objective. The comments supporting the objective refer primarily to the need to expand water supply and to the methods of achieving the objective. Fifty comments emphasize the importance of conserving ground water supplies. Fifty-seven support the construction of more dams and lakes. Another 40 comments express the view that cropland irrigation should have top priority among competing needs for water.

Respondents who oppose the objective note the expense involved in developing research and technology. Five comments voice opposition to unnecessary dams.

There are few comments on the proposed objective levels and only a few on the cost of achieving the objective. There are 25 comments, however, on the method of financing (cost sharing) and 14 on the need for increased funding. Thirty-six comments say that the objective should have added emphasis, and 54 comments advocate improving or expanding the objective. Four comments say that pursuing the water supply objective is too expensive. One comment suggests developing drought-resistant crops.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Objectives

Three objectives address the issue of fish and wildlife habitat. These objectives, and the number of comments addressing each, are (1) reduce loss of wetlands--35,924 comments, (2) increase instream flow--27,913 comments, and (3) improve terrestrial wildlife habitat--30,684 comments. Over 94 percent of the comments simply express a range of agreeement or disagreement with an objective (see table 5-2) or place a general rating, or priority, on an objective (see table 5-3). About 1 percent, or 842, of the comments address the adequacy of activities proposed to accomplish the objectives. The ratio is almost identical for each objective (68 percent think that the activities are adequate, 32 percent think that they are inadequate).

[Although the fish and wildlife habitat objectives ranked among the lowest in support and among the highest in opposition among RCA respondents (see table 5-4), the general public clearly supports government efforts to preserve habitat. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 92 percent said that the federal government should make sure that the natural homes of fish and wildlife are protected, only 4 percent said that the government should not do this, and 3 percent were not sure.

The public clearly feels that the Nation as a whole benefits from habitat preservation. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 61 percent said that they benefited a fair amount to a great deal from the federal government's efforts to help make sure that fish and wildlife habitat is protected, 23 percent said that they benefited just some, and 13 percent said that they benefited hardly at all.]

Reduce loss of wetlands.--Almost 36,000 comments address the objective to reduce the net loss of wetlands resulting from their conversion to agricultural uses. Over 73 percent, or 25,643, of the comments about this objective are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 12,507 express support, 8,386 express opposition, and 4,750 are "neutral." Almost 3 percent, or 717, state "no opinion." Another 17 percent, or 6,244, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 3,589 rate the objective to reduce conversion of wetlands as a very high or high priority, 2,510 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 115 comments are "generally opposed."

As table 5-4 shows, there is less support for this objective than for any other. Support is higher among environmental groups and state government and is greatest in the Northeast and Midwest. Support is lowest in the South. Respondents in the West and Midwest make the greatest proportion of "neutral" comments. Opposition is greater than for any other objective. Opposition comes primarily from farm organizations, individuals, and local government and is greatest in the South. Opposition also ran high among respondents affiliated with environmental groups.

Several groups of comments could be discerned in relation to the objective to preserve wetlands. Over 1 percent of the comments (494) state that cropland is more important than wetlands or that wetlands should be drained for use as cropland. Other comments (84) state that wetland drainage is necessary. Many comments (294) say that achieving the objective would have adverse effects on agriculture.

Some comments state that the RCA documents did not clearly explain the term "wetlands." One respondent states that he is in favor of the objective to preserve wetlands "provided we are talking about . . . true wetlands and not agricultural land which needs drainage." Other comments (433) state that a better inventory of wetlands is needed or that the term needs to be clarified or redefined. Some of these comments state that a distinction should be made between wetlands and wet soils. Many of the comments suggesting clarification also support preserving only certain types of wetlands, such as marshes or inundated swamps. Some comments suggest that "the loss of wetland types 1 and 2 should not be a concern." As further evidence of the confusion over

what qualifies as wetlands, 133 comments say that the data are in error or insufficient, a much greater number of such comments than were made about other objectives. Other comments (62) state that the terminology of the section in the RCA document dealing with wetlands is confusing or inconsistent, making the objective difficult to evaluate.

A total of 268 comments state the objective to reduce loss of wetlands is a useless effort, that it is impossible to administer, or that it is politically unacceptable. Over 80 comments say that the objective needs more emphasis, and 65 say that it should have less emphasis. This is the only wildlife habitat objective with a majority stating more emphasis is needed.

Over 30 comments (more than for any objective except the objective to improve wildife habitat) state that the objective to reduce loss of wetlands conflicts with other objectives.

Many more comments give reasons for opposing the objective than give reasons for supporting it. The few favorable comments relate primarily to the need to protect land from irreversible changes and the need to preserve natural habitat. Most favorable comments focus on the intensity of action needed ("reestablish wetlands that have already been drained") or on possible methods of achieving the objective ("establish public ownership of wetlands"). Some comments (30) say that conversion of tidal wetlands should be stopped.

Almost none of the comments focus on the objective levels. Several comments do suggest changing the objective to state "reduce the net loss of wetlands (types 3-20) resulting from agricultural uses. Minimize the loss of wetlands to uses other than agricultural." Comments about cost are about the possible effects of activities ("reducing wetland conversion would have an adverse impact on farm production") rather than about the amount of money needed to achieve the objective. Other comments include:

	Number of comments
Compliance should be voluntary	75
There are too many existing regulations; too much red tape	33
Tougher laws and better enforcement are needed	30
Protecting nature and wildlife should have top priority	29
Comments about methods of compensation	82
Avoid duplication of effort; this should not be a USDA objective	12
Reestablish wetlands drained in the past 10 years	10
The objective would have an adverse impact on agriculture	294
The regional meetings did not supply enough information	61
Must be cost-effective and practical	50

Increase instream flow.--Over 81 percent of the 27,913 comments about the objective to use the savings from water conservation to increase instream water flows in water-short areas are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 14,256 express support, 2,881 express opposition, and 5,772 are "neutral." Another 6 percent, or 1,396, of the comments state "no opinion." Another 11 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 1,571 rate the objective to increase instream flow as a very high or high priority, 1,427 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 23 are generally opposed.

[Those sampled by the Harris survey were asked to allocate excess water for various uses. In this context, increasing instream flows (water for fish and wildlife) ranked lowest. Of 100 excess gallons, the general public proposed the following allocation:

	Gallons
Water for producing food----------	26
Water for household use----------	21
Water for industry and jobs----------	19
Water for developing energy resources--	17
Water for fish and wildlife----------	17]

Comments about the need for more or less emphasis (27) are about equally divided. Fifteen comments state that the terminology used is confusing or that the discussion of the objective to increase instream flow needs to be simplified.

Less than 2 percent of the comments express reasons for supporting or opposing the objective. Reasons given relate primarily to water rights and the need to establish riparian rights laws, the need to conserve water upstream, and the construction of dams.

As table 5-2 shows, support is relatively low for this objective. Support is high among environmental groups and is greatest in the South. Opposition comes primarily from farm organizations, individuals, and local government, and is greatest in the West. The South shows the least opposition.

There are no comments about the objective levels and very few about cost. Other comments are:

	Number of comments
Drainage is necessary----------	12
Channelization is useless----------	10
Permit limited stream channel changes-------	13
Build more dams and lakes----------	10

Improve wildlife habitat.--Over 30,600 comments address the objective to improve the quality and diversity of terrestrial wildlife habitat by enhancing vegetation on uncultivated land and improving farming practices. Over 83 percent, or 25,653, of the comments about this objective are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 18,854 express support, 2,830 express opposition, and 3,969 are "neutral." In addition, 377 state "no opinion." Another 10 percent, or 3,133, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of

these comments, 1,852 rate the objective as a very high or high priority, 1,260 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 21 are generally opposed.

Sixty-six comments say the objective to improve wildlife habitat needs more emphasis, and 230 say it should have less emphasis. Forty-two comments say that the conservation of nature and wildlife is very important and should be done at any cost.

Support for this objective comes mainly from state government. Opposition comes mainly from individuals. Environmental groups express both high support and high opposition. Both support and opposition are greatest in the West; the other regions have a higher proportion of "neutral" responses.

Comments of support for improving wildlife habitat say that clearcutting should be reduced (5 comments), the objective should be combined with one of the alternative strategies discussed in chapter 7 (47), habitat should be conserved because fish and wildlife have a right to exist (32), shelterbelts and windbreaks should be constructed (9), and the best way to achieve the objective is through education (10).

Some comments expressing opposition say that this objective would hurt farmers or would raise the price of food (11 comments). Some say that the objective is unnecessary (10) or should be strictly voluntary (40) or that there is already too much government regulation (9). Others (13) say that there should be no expansion of parkland. Sixty-six comments (57 from the South) complain that the objective to improve wildlife habitat conflicts with other objectives.

There is almost no comment on the objective levels. Comments about cost relate to the effect that achieving the objective would have on food prices or farmland, to the method of financing (generally favoring government subsidization), or to the need for increased financing. Among the other comments are:

	Number of comments
The government has done a poor job so far---	56
Maintain present level of activity----------	39
Drainage is necessary----------	39
Conservation practices will benefit wildlife----------	70
The government should subsidize efforts, reimburse landowners----------	46
Programs should benefit farmers----------	16
Wildlife protection measures should be differentiated from agricultural policies----	26

Flood Damage Control Objectives

Two of the objectives relate to flooding. These objectives and the number of comments about each, are (1) reduce flood damage--33,033 comments, and (2) give priority to protecting agricultural land and wetlands from flooding--28,004 comments.

Reduce flood damage.--Of the comments addressing the objective to reduce upstream flood damage by 16 percent using existing technology and structural and nonstructural measures and to develop new technology to bring about further reduction, over 80 percent, or 26,516, are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 22,890 express support, 1,503 express opposition, and 2,123 are "neutral." In addition, 387 state "no opinion." Another 11 percent, or 3,654, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,567 rate the objective to reduce upstream flood damage as a very high or high priority, 1,039 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 52 are generally opposed.

The other 7 percent, or 2,474, of the comments about the objective to reduce upstream flood damage are diverse. Among the more frequent of these comments are:

	Number of comments
Restrict development of flood plains; use flood plains only as farmland	215
Reduce flood damage by using structural measures; build more dams and lakes	226
Reduce flood damage primarily through non-structural measures	96
Prohibit construction of unneeded dams; dam construction causes ecological problems	80
Reduce flood damage through education	11
Store excess floodwater in ground water basins; use to help prevent ground water depletion	23
Put greater emphasis on preventing flood damage in urban areas	19
Drainage is necessary	55
Streambank stabilization is important	14
The government should subsidize efforts	14
More technical assistance is needed	16
Tougher laws and better enforcement are needed	7
More research and development are needed	50
Increase funds for cost sharing	38
Responsibility belongs to either federal, state, or local government	28
Responsibility should rest with all three levels of government	58
Proposed activities are adequate to meet the objective	128
Proposed activities are not adequate to meet the objective	161
Maintain present level of activities	30
The objective is unrealistic, politically unacceptable	20
The objective needs more emphasis	314
The objective needs less emphasis	11
There are too many existing regulations, too much government red tape	29

Combine the objective with one of the alternative strategies in chapter 7 (redirecting present programs has the most comments [39] followed by performance bonus [33])----------	195
Comments about the effectiveness of channelization----------	75
Comments about forest land----------	22
The data are insufficient or erroneous------	31

Support for the objective is lowest among state government respondents and in the Midwest. Support is greatest in the South. Opposition is greatest in the Northeast and is highest among state and federal government respondents.

This objective has a high degree of support. Comments address the method of flood control (channelization, construction of lakes and dams, nonstructural measures, land use planning and regulation), the need for research, funding (cost sharing and technical assistance), and the need for education.

> [The large number of comments saying that development of the flood plain should be reduced or restricted shows support for government regulation. That the general public favors regulation of this development is shown in the Harris survey. Of those sampled, 81 percent said that they thought the federal government should be involved in keeping people from building in flood-prone areas. Only 15 percent said that this was not a proper function of government.]

Respondents who express opposition to the objective mention primarily the excessive cost, the problems caused by structural measures ("ecological disruption," "greater damage if structures fail"), and opposition to excessive government involvement.

There is little comment on proposed objective levels. A few comments relate to cost and to funding methods.

Flood prevention project priority.--Of the 28,004 comments addressing the objective to give priority to projects that prevent loss of prime farmland and wetlands due to flooding, almost 81 percent, or 22,657, are accounted for in table 5-2. Of the comments, 16,424 express support, 2,712 express opposition, and 3,521 are "neutral." Over 3 percent, or 949, state "no opinion." Another 10 percent, or 3,338, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,361 rate the objective as a very high or high priority, 940 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 37 are generally opposed.

Certain comments cast some doubt on the validity of these totals for support and opposition. Some respondents, for example, state that they strongly disagree with the objective but qualify their disagreement by stating that if the wording of the objective were altered to exclude protection of wetlands then they would agree. Other respondents state they agree only with that part of the objective that proposes protecting cropland. The issue of protecting cropland versus protecting both cropland and wetlands is also reflected

in other comments. Several comments state that "wetlands" should be redefined. This ties in with the disagreement evident in the comments about the objective to reduce the loss of wetlands through their conversion to agricultural use.

The other 4 percent, or 1,060, of the comments about flood prevention project priorities address primarily the issue of cropland versus wetlands, the proposed activities, and methods of flood prevention. Some of these comments are:

	Number of comments
A better inventory of wetlands is needed; "wetlands" should be redefined	188
Cropland is more important than wetlands; protect prime farmland	66
Restrict development of flood plains	25
Build more dams and lakes to control flood damage	22
Use nonstructural measures to control flood damage; prohibit unneeded dams	14
The proposed activities are adequate to meet the objective	131
The proposed activities are not adequate to meet the objective	155
Maintain the present level of activities	24
The objective needs more emphasis	57
The objective needs less emphasis	11
Responsibility should rest with local government	16
Responsibility should rest with federal or state government, or should be shared by all three levels	5

Support for this objective is highest among environmental groups and is greatest in the Northeast and Midwest. Opposition comes mainly from individuals and the federal government and is greatest in the South.

There are relatively few comments giving reasons for support or opposition. Many comments suggest the types of land or places where land should be protected. A few oppose uniform national standards. There are few comments relating to funding, expense, or objective levels.

Energy Conservation and Production Objectives

In the RCA documents, USDA proposed two objectives which would contribute to energy self-sufficiency in agriculture by 1990. These objectives, and the number of comments addressing each, are (1) reduce energy use--30,962 comments; and (2) increase energy production--31,000 comments. The objective to increase energy production ranks much higher in intensity of support and lower in intensity of opposition than the objective to reduce energy use. (See tables 5-2 and 5-4). In fact, the objective to increase energy production ranks third in intensity of support among all objectives. Only the objectives to reduce soil erosion and to retain prime farmland enjoy more support.

[Although these objectives address only agricultural production or conservation of energy, the greater support for increasing energy production contrasts with the attitude of the general public as shown in the Harris survey. Of those responding to the Harris survey, 59 percent believed that the country should emphasize conserving energy and 26 percent believed that the country should emphasize producing more energy. Thirteen percent were neutral.]

These two objectives are closely related. Many of the comments about saving energy were made when referring to the objective to produce more energy, and vice versa. These comments are summarized in the following list.

	Number of comments
Energy can be saved by using appropriate conservation methods	302
Comments in favor of gasohol production	191
Leave crop residue to control erosion, do not use for gasohol	52
Regionalize production to eliminate excessive transportation	63
Diversify energy sources (e.g., solar, wind, geothermal)	193
Government should subsidize efforts to reduce energy use	56
More research and development are needed	193
Additional emphasis is needed; the objective deserves immediate attention	242
Less emphasis is needed	30
Present level of activity is adequate	16
Combine with one of the alternative strategies in chapter 7 (redirecting present program has the highest number of comments [77] followed by state leadership [59])	356
Meeting the objective is too expensive, an ineffective use of tax dollars	41
Objective is not compatible with or does not address crop production	49
The proposed activities are adequate to meet the objective	261
The proposed activities are not adequate to meet the objective	361
Responsibility should rest with the private sector	41
Comments about whether this should be a federal, state, or local responsibility	13
There are too many existing regulations, too much red tape	21
A useless effort, impossible to administer; politically unacceptable	28

Avoid intra- and inter-agency duplication of effort; should not be a USDA objective	70
Drainage will be necessary	31
The decision should be left up to the landowner; compliance should be voluntary	20
American farmers are doing a great job, they should be commended	25
Comments about irrigation methods	14
Use forest biomass	13

The 624 comments not included in the list or tables are very diverse and have low frequencies. Many do not relate directly to the objective. These are listed in the appendix.

Reduce energy use.--Over 83 percent, or 25,824, of the 30,962 comments about the objective of reducing energy use per unit of agricultural output are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 21,138 express support, 2,417 express opposition, and 2,269 are "neutral." In addition, 369 comments state "no opinion." Another 10 percent, or 3,157, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 1,685 rate the objective as a very high or high priority, 1,467 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 5 are generally opposed.

> [The general public clearly feels that they benefit from reduction of agricultural use of energy and that the government should help farmers to conserve energy. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 22 percent said that they benefited a great deal from the federal government's efforts to help conserve energy by encouraging efficient farming practices and 31 percent said that they benefited a fair amount. Twenty-three percent said that they benefited just some, and 16 percent said hardly at all. Eight percent were not sure.]

Most of the other 5 percent, or 1,594, of the comments address: (1) the possibility of saving energy by using appropriate conservation methods, such as conservation tillage; (2) the need for further research and development; (3) the need to regionalize food production to decrease energy used in transporting food to market; (4) the methods of funding the activities; and (5) the need for more emphasis on the objective. Of the comments about the adequacy of the proposed activities, 60 percent state that the activities are inadequate.

Support for this objective is greatest from state and federal government respondents. Support is greatest in the Northeast. Opposition comes primarily from local government and individuals and is greatest in the West.

Those supporting the objective give few reasons why. Those opposing the objective most frequently mention concern about government interference with individual rights, concern about limiting the options available to farmers, and concern about the effect on crop production and food prices.

Disagreement with the objective to reduce energy use (9 percent) is more than two times greater than disagreement with the objective to increase energy

production (4 percent). This suggests concern about possible limits on freedom of choice and the necessity of making changes in farming methods and lifestyles. Several (60) comments state that the respondent is very concerned or alarmed about the implications of the objective to reduce agricultural use of energy.

Increase energy production.--Over 82 percent, or 25,502, of the 31,000 comments about the objective to increase net production of energy from agricultural land are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 22,614 express support, 1,128 express opposition, and 1,760 are "neutral." Another 343 state "no opinion." About 11 percent, or 3,432, of the comments about the objective are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,520 rate the objective as a very high or high priority, 893 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 9 are generally opposed.

Most of the other 6 percent, or 1,723, of the comments address: (1) the production of gasohol or the diversification of energy sources, (2) the need for further research and development, (3) the importance of crop residue in reducing erosion, and (4) how activities should be funded.

> [While over 400 comments address gasohol production and diversification of energy sources (solar, geothermal, synfuel, etc.), the comments do not clearly show how the respondents would rank the importance of each source. The Harris survey, however, asked the public specifically to compare gasohol and synthetic fuels (synfuels). Gasohol was clearly preferred. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 48 percent said that the government should support gasohol more than synfuels, while 22 percent favored synfuels over gasohol. Twelve percent said that the government should support both, and 4 percent said that the government should support neither. Fourteen percent were not sure, and 1 percent did not answer.
>
> The public was also asked which would cause the least damage to the land. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 59 percent said that gasohol is likely to cause the least damage to the land used in producing it, while 19 percent said that synfuels would cause the least damage. Six percent said the effect on the land would be the same with either, and 16 percent were not sure.]

Support for the objective is broadly based and is greatest in the South and Midwest. Greatest opposition comes from federal government respondents. Opposition is highest in the Northeast.

Those supporting the objective also support gasohol production. Some are concerned about the consequences if crop residue is used for gasohol production. Those opposing the objective comment primarily on the need to emphasize other energy sources (solar, geothermal, etc.) and the need to emphasize food production over energy production.

Related Resource Objectives

Use organic waste.--Over 84 percent of the 30,483 comments on the objective to increase the use of organic waste to improve soil tilth and fertility are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 23,114 express support, 893 express opposition, and 1,717 are "neutral." In addition, 370 state "no opinion." Another 11 percent, or 3,361, of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these comments, 2,115 rate the objective as a very high priority, 1,219 rate it as a medium or lower priority, and 27 are generally opposed. Support for the objective is greatest in the Northeast and lowest in the West. The other 3 percent of the comments are summarized in the following list.

	Number of comments
Encourage organic farming; use sewage as fertilizer	110
Government should subsidize efforts to increase use of organic waste	24
Recycle wastes	17
Produce gasohol from organic waste	17
Diversify energy sources	17
Increased funding and technical assistance are needed	39
Animal waste disposal is a problem	8
Additional emphasis is needed; the objective deserves immediate attention	64
Less emphasis is needed	2
Combine with one of the alternative strategies in chapter 7 (redirecting present programs and performance bonus tied for most comments [34 each])	178
Proposed activities are adequate to meet the objective	167
Proposed activities are not adequate to meet the objective	119
More research and development are needed	55
More education is needed	15

Urban area conservation.--Over 29,500 comments address the objective of conservation in urban areas. This objective contains several components--reducing downstream urban flood loss, providing information to help developers overcome resource limitations, minimizing conversion of prime farmland and wetlands, and reducing sediment yield from construction sites. About 84 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-2. Of these comments, 20,614 express support, 1,855 express opposition, and 2,453 are "neutral." Another 544 state "no opinion." About 11 percent of the comments are accounted for in table 5-3. Of these, 2,135 rate the objective a very high or high priority, 954 rate it a medium or lower priority, and 25 are generally opposed.

Respondents from the Midwest rank this objective in the upper third of the support rankings. Respondents from other regions rank it in the middle range of both support and opposition. Of the relatively few comments (other than those expressing agreement) that say how much emphasis should be given

to conservation efforts in urban areas, most say greater emphasis or immediate attention is needed.

	Number of comments
Increase efforts, give more emphasis--------	88
Maintain at present level-------------------	3
Decrease efforts, give less emphasis--------	5
	96

By 168 to 118, respondents say that activities are adequate to meet the objectives. Among the remaining comments, those relating most directly to the objective and made most frequently are:

	Number of comments
Control urban sprawl-----------------------	27
Land use concerns--------------------------	27
Comments about erosion and sediment---------	14
Comments about division of responsibility among federal, state, and local government----------	26
There is too much government red tape-------	11
More education is needed-------------------	24
Concern for rights of individuals-----------	15
Combine with one of the alternative strategies listed in chapter 7----------	43
Comments about funding----------------------	31

Other/all conservation objectives.--Some 8,798 comments are coded to the topic "other/all conservation objectives." These comments relate to conservation in general, any group of conservation objectives, any additional suggested conservation objectives, and some comments about government in general.

More than 2,000 comments express support for or opposition to all of the objectives. Ten times more comments express support than opposition (see tables 5-2 and 5-3).

An additional 251 comments say that conservation is good, deserves immediate attention, or contributes to public benefits.

A total of 376 comments relate to funding for all objectives. Most address the levels of funding. These comments are:

	Number of comments
Increase funding, base funding on RCA findings----------	142
Source of funding----------	83
Raise taxes (4), users expense (9), public (25), shared by government (45).	
Direct funding to worst problems first-----	66
Increase funding to field, enforcement agencies----------	78
Other----------	7
	376

Many comments relate to the methods for achieving conservation in general. These include:

	Number of comments
Use incentives	170
Conduct more research	165
Make no change in existing programs	109
Provide technical assistance	52
Keep programs voluntary	198
Avoid uniform national standards	184
	878

Comments coded to this topic address a wide range of issues. For example, 63 comments refer to saline seeps, 133 refer to drainage, and 83 call for higher levels of cost sharing. The comments include reference to "an impossible task" some 45 times, but call for cooperative work 41 times.

Other comments are included in the appendix.

Other comments.--Some comments were coded to other topics but seem to relate more to objectives than to the topic to which they were coded. These comments relate primarily to funding, incentives, individual rights, and cost effectiveness. Although not addressing a specific objective, the thrust of these comments may be indicative of public attitudes toward implementation of the objectives.

	Number of comments
Provide incentives to landowners (such as price supports, low interest loans, tax credits); eliminate disincentives; subsidize to reach goals	961
Efforts to reach objective levels must be cost effective, practical, and esthetically correct	64
Penalize those who do not conserve	61
Do not limit individual rights; reducing farmers' choices may be detrimental	465
Solve the worst problems first; target resources	64

Summary

- The comments express strong support for USDA's traditional conservation objectives. These traditional objectives have soil erosion reduction as a cornerstone.

- The respondents support allocating greater resources (funds and personnel) on a sufficient scale to accomplish the objectives. It appears that most, but not all, of those who responded would accept targeting conservation resources (dollars and people), if necessary, rather than spread resources too thin to do the job.

- Respondents want USDA to take an active role in helping to protect and preserve farmland yet not attempt direct federal control. Retention of farmland has very strong support from the responding public.

- Conservation objectives directed to noncropland, such as wetlands preservation and wildlife habitat improvement, are supported by a majority of those commenting on them but fare badly in ordinal rankings of the objectives. Many of those who responded do not want these objectives to divert USDA resources from what they see as more important conservation concerns. They also express concern that these objectives will conflict with the traditional USDA objectives.

- For the traditional objectives, such as erosion reduction, flood damage reduction, and the like, which are undertaken at least partly to benefit society as a whole, the respondents want the beneficiary--through the federal government--to help bear the cost. They are asking for partnership--for cost sharing, not cost shifting.

- Even as they seek federal dollars, the respondents want local control, particularly of the methods for achieving conservation. This suggests a two-tiered program as a possibility.

- If greater federal intervention (such as regulation or penalities) is needed for serious conservation problems, respondents want it directed only at the most flagrant violators, not at typical landowners who do care about the land and will respond to voluntary programs based on some incentives and technical assistance.

- The respondents appear to believe that many conservation problems originate in urban areas. The rural agricultural community, which is USDA's traditional clientele, would appear to approve USDA's undertaking urban conservation activities if these would help solve resource problems.

- The respondents appear to favor maintaining traditional conservation objectives and redirecting the program to meet water quality, energy, and farmland retention objectives.

- The principal statements made in support of the objectives are: natural resources conservation should have a higher priority than production; conservation is in the public interest; accomplishing the objectives

will conserve resources for the future. Those making these statements are primarily farmers. However, most respondents who express support give no reasons for their support.

- The principal objections to the objectives are: excessive government control; cost-ineffectiveness; production is more important than conservation; the proposed program would be ineffective.

- Nearly all comments address only a general question, such as "Should prime farmland be retained?" Very few comments are made about the proposed objective levels. While public response indicates concern for conservation issues, the results suggest little about whether the public feels the proposed objective levels are adequate.

- This report does not indicate which objectives are of highest priority to the public. While the degree of support for an objective may be taken as a proxy statement for priority, this does not tell the whole story. Degree of support may be different from degree of commitment. For example, on the question of reducing the conversion of wetlands, of those expressing only agreement or disagreement with the objective, 48 percent express agreement and 33 percent express disagreement. This objective receives less support than any other.

- The few comments about cost are primarily negative, that is, achieving the objective would cost too much. Other comments say that conservation is worth any price. Concern about cost is directed more toward "who will pay?" rather than "what will it cost?"

Chapter 6 - Activities for Reaching Conservation Objectives

This chapter focuses on the public's response to how the objectives are to be achieved--that is, the practices, policies, data collection and dissemination methods, research, and planning that will be most effective in realizing the objectives. The draft Program Report and Environmental Impact Statement and the Summary detail specific activities for each of the seven resource areas. The public responded with a wide variety of comments on conservation activities.

Comments reveal generally widespread support for traditional activities that USDA has practiced and encouraged over the years. For example, many people express enthusiasm for conservation tillage, technical and financial assistance, erosion and sediment control measures, irrigation water management, and flood control measures. A significant number of responses suggest that farmers need economic information as well as technical information. The public makes fewer comments about relatively recent issues such as new energy forms, biomass production, use of alternative chemicals, and methods of water conservation and storage. Responses come from both sides of long-standing controversies, for example, preservation versus drainage of wetlands, structural versus nonstructural flood control measures, chemical versus organic fertilizers, and determination of T values for various soils and various land uses. Some practices such as channelization elicit widespread comment even though they are not presented as suggested activities in the RCA documents. Respondents make a great number of suggestions about practices and policies that are not discussed in the RCA documents but that apply generally to one or more of the resource areas.

> [When asked what conserving the soil means, those sampled in the Harris survey responded by naming various conservation activities. Some of those frequently mentioned include:
> - o Rotating crops.
> - o Tilling and cropping methods.
> - o Planting trees, grass, and cover crops.
> - o Building terraces.
> - o Stripcropping.
> - o Contour plowing.
> - o Using conservation tillage.
> - o Planting windbreaks.
> - o Using natural and chemical fertilizers.
> - o Preserving forest and wilderness.
>
> The frequency of responses on these activities is roughly parallel for the Harris survey and the public comments, with one exception. The one activity mentioned more frequently by far than any other in the Harris survey was crop rotation, which was named by 30 percent of the 7,000 respondents; crop rotation is mentioned rarely by respondents to the RCA documents.]

The Scope of the Response

Nationwide, 33,767 comments (64,963 signatures) deal with specific activities proposed to meet RCA objectives or suggest other activities that are not

listed in the RCA documents. Forty-five percent of these comments are from the South, 26 percent from the Midwest, 18 percent from the Northeast, and 11 percent from the West. These responses are in the following forms:

Form of response	Percentage of comments
Personal letter	30
Petition or form letter	23
Structured response form	33
Nonstructured response form	12
Public transcript	1
Other	*
Total	100

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Most of the respondents are individuals. The respondents represent various organizations and interest groups, as follows:

Respondent type	Percentage of comments
Individuals	69
Local government	16
Federal government	7
State government	3
Environmental groups	2
Commodity groups	1
Farm organizations	1
Academic	*
Agribusiness	*
Civic/social	*
Industrial/trade	*
Minority organizations	*
Nonagricultural business/industry	*
Youth organizations	*
Other groups	*
Other	*
Total	100

* Less than 0.5 percent

Because comments that apply to activities were coded to activities topics and to other topics as well, it is not possible to confine the scope of this chapter to the comments designated for activities topics alone. Instead, this chapter considers comments related to activities regardless of the topic to which they were coded. Comments dealing with activities in other topic areas, therefore, are also discussed in other chapters. The frequencies for specific comments may be different in other chapters because they represent different topic code-comment code combinations.

Data in this chapter represent the number of comments, unless otherwise indicated. Where there is a notable difference between the number of comments and the number of signatures, the number of signatures is also shown.

Activities for Solving Resource Problems

Across all resource areas, specific activities most often mentioned include technical assistance, agricultural research, and erosion control measures. Conservation tillage, drainage activities, erosion control measures, and structural flood control are most often favored or suggested for more widespread use. Least popular are wetland retention policies and data collection methods, which are opposed or questioned by a number of respondents. Wetland retention is opposed by a margin of 8 to 1 by comments, 14 to 1 by signatures. Use of land for wildlife habitat in general is supported by a margin of 2 to 1.

Comments were received on activities in all seven resource areas. Although some comments relate to more than one resource area or activity, the following list indicates the approximate number of comments on each major activity by number of comments and by number of signatures.

	Number of comments	Number of signatures
Soil Resource Quantity and Quality:		
o General comments on soil resource activities.	7,553	15,713
o Collect data on soil and water resources reliable at the county level for the 1985 RCA report. Use inventory data to identify priorities to be addressed by conservation programs.	1,903	2,285
o Provide the land user with information to evaluate conservation needs on cropland, forest land, and grazing land eroding in excess of T value. (T value represents soil loss tolerance. It is defined as the maximum rate of annual soil erosion that will permit a high level of cropland and rangeland productivity to be obtained economically and indefinitely. For cropland, forest land, pastureland, and native pasture, the estimated average is 5 tons per acre per year. For rangeland, the estimated average is 2 tons per acre per year.) Make enough assistance available to the user to solve the erosion problems.	6,930	20,577
o Maintain conservation systems already in place.	384	422

	Number of comments	Number of signatures
o Install conservation practices on 93 million acres of cropland now losing between 5 and 14 tons of soil per acre per year. Representative practices include permanent vegetative cover (2.7 million acres), conservation tillage (93.7 million acres), stripcropping (10.8 million acres), and terracing (8.4 million acres). Install conservation practices on 48 million acres of cropland now losing more than 14 tons of soil per acre per year. Apply conservation tillage to all lands that stay in crops. Remove some 17 million acres of cropland from cultivation.	1,675	2,194
Water Quality:		
o Conduct research to develop and transfer cost effective nonpoint pollution control technology.	Research needs and technology development are included in this tabulation under "Soil Resources." Technology transfer is under "Related Resources."	
o Use cultural measures including alternative chemicals, optimum timing for application of pesticides and nutrients, resistant crop varieties, elimination of excessive applications of pesticides and nutrients, and toxic management techniques such as integrated pest management.	902	2,147
o Control runoff and erosion to control pollutants typically attached to soil particles.	2,191	4,082
o Control animal waste.	259	313
o Manage irrigation water, recover tailwater, conserve water.	Irrigation activities are included in this tabulation under "Water Supply."	
Water Supply and Conservation:		
o General comments on water supply activities.	737	947
o Increase onfarm irrigation efficiencies: ditch lining, piping, land leveling, tailwater recovery, improved management of irrigation water, shifts to low water use crops and stress-resistant plant varieties.	612	1,467

	Number of comments	Number of signatures
Increase off-farm irrigation efficiencies by canal lining. Provide irrigators with information on when, how much, and how to apply water on 24 million acres in the West. Develop information on all aspects of water use and supply for use by irrigators.		
o Develop and use crop varieties more resistant to or tolerant of drought.	59	70
Fish and Wildlife Habitat:		
o General comments on fish and wildlife habitat activities.	960	1,094
o Determine what type of wetlands remain, where they are, and the relative value of each.	786	1,010
o Preserve existing wetlands and restore other wetlands through land rental and other means.	148	153
o Change any federal policies that result in wetland destruction.	1,071	1,748
o Develop wildlife habitat management criteria and implement wildlife management systems on cropland, rangeland, and other areas.	454	620
Upstream Flood Damages:		
o General comments on flood damage activities.	245	422
o Develop and implement (a) 20 small watershed plans each year using nonstructural and structural measures where appropriate and (b) 150 flood-hazard studies per year during the next 20 years.	1,182	1,451
o Develop 25 nonstructural plans in the next 10 years to develop and test new technology.	32	33
Energy Conservation and Production:		
o General comments on energy activities.	1,182	1,563
o Encourage methods of crop drying that would use forms of energy other than fossil fuels.	No comments received.	
o Step up research and information on fertilizer use, improve irrigation management, and establish more shelterbelts.	Research needs are included in this tabulation under "Soil Resources." Irrigation is included under "Water Supply."	

	Number of comments	Number of signatures
o Produce biomass as an energy source and develop technology for its conversion to usable energy; grow legumes as a source of nitrogen fertilizer.	113	163
Related Natural Resources:		
o General comments on other resources.	143	201
o Conduct research to ascertain the value of organic wastes for different soils.	387	582
o Improve technology transfer.	73	73
o Develop and implement improved waste management systems.	89	91
o Conduct flood plain hazard studies and implement storm and floodwater management programs.	Floodwater management is included in this tabulation under "Upstream Flood Damages."	
o Work with state and local agencies to help guide development toward areas where it would be compatible with natural resource protection.	See chapter 9.	
o Develop and implement sediment control activities.	314	422
Other Comments:		
o Comments received about activities other than those listed.	3,383	5,120

Adequacy of the Activities

More than 6,200 comments express opinions on the adequacy of the activities in general. Of these, 60 percent say that USDA's conservation activities are adequate to meet the objectives and 40 percent say that those activities are inadequate. A few say that certain activities would be adequate only in conjunction with other activities. Most of these responses were submitted on structured forms. Respondents make 252 comments calling for more emphasis on conservation practices. According to 50 comments, environmental concerns should not interfere with conservation activities.

Some respondents point to a need for change in emphasis among activities. For instance, one individual says that streambank erosion is overemphasized.

The activities for achieving fish and wildlife habitat and water quality objectives are considered adequate by the greatest percentages. Judged least adequate are the activities for energy. The figures are:

Activities related to--	Percent saying activities are Adequate	Inadequate	Number of comments
Soil resources	64	36	1,286
Water quality	67	33	1,546
Water supply and conservation	56	44	574
Fish and wildlife habitat	68	32	842
Upstream flood damages	45	55	575
Energy conservation	42	58	620
Related natural resources 1/	59	42	572
Activities in general	79	21	180

1/ Total exceeds 100 percent because of rounding.

Soil Resource Activities

Erosion control measures.--Conservation tillage is favored in more than 600 comments, mostly from the Midwest. Respondents suggest tax incentives, direct compensation to farmers, subsidies for equipment purchase, and cost sharing to encourage use of conservation tillage. However, 5 individuals say that conservation tillage does not work well on all soils. A few observe that no-till reduces yield more than ordinary conservation tillage.

Stripcropping and shelterbelts are favored by 77 respondents, including 8 representatives of environmental organizations, who point out their environmental, economic, and energy benefits. Five respond that stripcropping creates a double cost. Others feel that the landowner should be compensated for using stripcropping.

More than 170 comments, almost all from the Midwest and South, suggest terracing for reducing erosion; 56 state that large equipment destroys terraces. Fifty-two call for less dependence on terraces and other technology.

Only 37 comments say that T values are too high. Inaccuracy or inconsistency of T value determination and use of the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) is cited in 252 comments (471 signatures). More than 100 comments, mostly from the Midwest, state that T values are realistic. Maintaining permanent vegetative cover is cited as an example of best land use, but a few other responses say cost sharing should be eliminated for vegetative cover.

About 50 comments favor increased emphasis on the maintenance of present conservation systems. Maintaining the present level of conservation assistance is favored in 16 comments. Fourteen say that farmers cannot afford to maintain present conservation systems. Thirty-one comments say that maintenance should be enforced if land changes hands. The importance of planning for maintenance is mentioned in nine comments.

Nationally uniform standards for conservation maintenance are opposed by 13 respondents. Education is seen as a solution by 15 respondents. Nine say that conservation practices are too expensive to maintain. Although 52 call for subsidies for maintenance of conservation systems, another 52 say that maintenance should be at the land user's expense. Farmers do a great job of maintaining conservation systems, say 124 comments.

Data collection.--A number of comments question the data used in the RCA documents or the methods of collecting these data. Four suggest that forest acreage data should be obtained from forestry agencies. Fifty-four comments say the public needs to understand how the data were collected, and about 1,500 say data are erroneous or are insufficient to make decisions. Data linking nonpoint pollution to agriculture are questioned by 164 respondents, mostly in personal letters. Two comments suggest separating pastureland and rangeland data because combining rangeland and pastureland data assumptions is inaccurate and misleading.

More emphasis on problem identification and data collection is favored in 20 comments, and less emphasis is suggested in 2 comments. The need for soil surveys to define problems is cited in 158 comments. More than 250 comments mention that saline seeps and road salt runoff are major conservation problems; three-fourths of these comments are from the Midwest.

Other practices.--Respondents also comment on a few practices relating to soil resources that are not listed as RCA activities. These include:

	Number of comments
Apply lime to woodlots because of acid rain--	25
Prevent conversion of steep wooded slopes to cropland----------	131
Stop harvesting timber for firewood----------	53
Require legume planting 2 out of 3 years-----	13
Plant trees for erosion control, energy, beauty, or pollution abatement----------	98
Improve methods of weed and brush control----	265

Water Quality Activities

Toxics and nutrients.--Concern about the safety of pesticides and herbicides is mentioned in 590 comments calling for voluntary or mandatory restrictions on their use. Of these, 71 percent are from individuals; 20 percent from the federal government; 5 percent, state government; 14 percent, local government; and 4 percent, environmental groups. Nineteen others specifically suggest encouraging integrated pest control. Biological and cultural pest control methods are costly and rarely successful, note three responses. Another respondent is concerned about the pollution of ground water through spring runoff if sewage sludge is applied when the ground is frozen.

Use of chemical fertilizers is seen as necessary for production in 244 comments, more than half of which are from the Midwest. Ninety-five comments say that USDA should discourage fall plowing and teach farmers how to use fertilizers; two-thirds of these are from the Midwest. Forty-six comments suggest making fertilizer from raw sewage.

[Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 61 percent felt strongly that the country should be moving in the direction of emphasizing and improving the natural productivity of the soil. Twenty-six

percent felt the country should be moving in the direction of emphasizing the use of more and better chemical fertilizers and farm technology.]

Sediment and dissolved solids.--Reducing sediment by controlling erosion is identified as an important concern in 2,096 comments. Many respondents suggest reducing erosion by a variety of methods. These methods include limiting the time land is bare, avoiding cropping of erodible soils, levying fines on landowners for excessive erosion, encouraging small farms, permanently seeding marginal lands, terracing, stopping logging operations at high elevations, planting trees along highways, and improving forest management. Road salt runoff into streams is mentioned as a major conservation problem in a few comments. Of the comments concerning sediment and salinity, 39 percent are from the South, 32 percent from the Midwest, 20 percent from the Northeast, and 9 percent from the West.

Some respondents identify other causes for erosion and water quality degradation. An environmental group in Pennsylvania points out that in their area, strip mining, gas and oil well drilling, and logging create many resource problems, including toxic pollutants in surface waters and severe erosion and sedimentation. Another respondent writes that drainage of agricultural lands reduces water pollution by helping to retain phosphorus and potassium on the land and by reducing erosion and sedimentation.

Waste management.--Concern about proper waste disposal is expressed in 259 comments, half of which are from the Northeast. Of these comments, 71 percent are from individuals, 14 percent from local units of government, 7 percent from the federal government, and 4 percent from environmental groups. Some comments suggest specific solutions, such as encouraging use of waterless toilets in areas where soil is unsuitable for septic tanks and outlawing use of dry wells for sewage disposal.

Water Supply and Conservation Activities

Ground water supply.--Concern over depletion of ground water is expressed in 349 comments. Another 81 say that water shortage will be a serious problem in the future. A Kansas farmer writes, "Our largest deterrent to good long-range conservation practices is the increasing use of underground water supplies, especially by sprinkler systems on marginal land." Another respondent is concerned that aquifer and water table composition can be drastically changed and may never be replenished if center-pivot irrigation is used on a majority of the existing cropland. Ground water supplies can be stabilized by modifying permit systems and water rights laws, suggests one respondent. Others call for improving sources of surface irrigation water to reduce dependence on ground water.

Comments from 38 respondents say that the high cost of water will reduce demand for water. About 230 comments say that to expand and conserve our water supply, we should drill wells rather than build reservoirs, build water recycling plants and desalination systems, use rivers as a water source, plant grass strips, and dredge old ponds instead of building new ones. Use

of waste water is mentioned in several comments, including a suggestion from a federal agency that irrigators be furnished technical assistance on the use of domestic and industrial waste water. The agency cites the potential for reducing use of chemical fertilizers, recharging ground water, and using the nitrogen and phosphorus in wastewater as fertilizer.

[Future availability of water is a concern to those sampled in the Harris survey. About 50 percent said that a shortage of water for homes, farms, businesses, and industry is very likely or somewhat likely in the next 10 years, and about 46 percent said it is somewhat unlikely or very unlikely. When asked to distribute $100 among six resource areas, those sampled in the Harris survey allocated $17.10 to increasing the availability of water, ranking it third among the six resource concerns.]

Irrigation.--Irrigation water management elicits both positive and negative responses. A total of 380 comments, two-thirds of them from the South, say that using water for irrigation is more important than using water for wildlife. Twenty-seven comments recommend more storage projects for irrigation.

Ninety-three responses suggest that irrigation systems should eliminate tailwater and not affect live streams, that a low-pressure center pivot system can reduce water and energy use, and that rising energy costs will force farmers back to gravity irrigation systems, which will increase erosion. Twenty-one comments (138 signatures) say that increased maintenance of irrigation systems is needed. Reduction in the use of irrigation is favored in 56 of the comments that identify irrigation as a contributor to environmental degradation. Sixteen favor limiting the amount of irrigated land that can be owned by one family, but 19 say to increase allowable irrigated acreage.

[Future availability of irrigation water is a concern to the general public as well. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 52 percent said that a shortage of irrigation water is very likely or somewhat likely in the next 10 years, while 41 percent said such a shortage is somewhat unlikely or very unlikely.]

Plant materials research.--Fifty-nine comments mention strengthening plant materials centers and other research to develop drought-resistant, stress-resistant crop varieties and vegetative cover.

Other suggestions.--Activities not included in the RCA program were also suggested, including:

	Number of comments
Provide financial help for use of rainwater in homes or businesses	7
Convert cropland to forest in water-short areas	18
Use saved water to increase streamflow and develop farmland	5
Improve brush management to meet increased demand for water	--

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Activities

Wetlands.--The definition of wetlands is questioned in 258 comments. Of these, 62 percent are from individuals, 29 percent from state and local governments, 17 percent from the federal government, and 7 percent from agricultural and farm organizations. Approximately 500 comments call for better inventory of wetlands. In 287 comments, respondents favor practices that serve fish and wildlife resources.

On the preservation of wetlands, 76 respondents call for establishing special preservation districts, stopping conversion of wetlands adjacent to navigable waters, and stopping conversion of tidal wetlands. Six suggest that wetlands can be formed at the expense of open water. Another 22 call for reestablishing wetlands already lost. Forty-four respondents favor public ownership for wetlands.

Another 793 comments favor draining wetlands for cropland and suggest removing restrictions that prevent providing assistance for draining wetland types 1 and 2. Sixty percent of the comments that favor retaining wetlands are from the Midwest. Support for draining wetlands is strongest in the South, where 63 percent of the comments favoring wetland drainage originate. Of the responses that favor draining wetlands, 65 percent are from individuals, 22 percent are from local government, 8 percent are from the federal government, and 2 percent each are from farm organizations and state governments. Other responses are from environmental groups, commodity groups, and one industrial group. One comment recommends establishing interagency work groups to consult on wetlands-related policies and programs.

Support for draining wetlands is expressed in a variety of comments, such as:

> "If a farmer can bring wetlands into production without affecting surrounding wetlands he should be allowed to do so."
>
> "Regulate wetland conversion--not all conversion is bad."
>
> "Regulations [on wetland drainage] must be practical."
>
> "I do not agree with stopping wetlands from going to agricultural uses. Someone needs to look at the projected food demand in the next 20 years and put their priorities in the right place. I like wildlife but not to the point that I must go hungry to enjoy it."
>
> "I favor drainage of wetlands. A farmer is in the business of producing."

Not everyone however, sees a conflict between wetlands and production. One conservation district in Texas writes: "Major wetlands should be preserved as they are essential and productive lands. The production of fish, crawfish, and shrimp should be developed to a fuller extent. This would conserve soil and water resources while producing nutritious, inexpensive food."

Other measures.--Support for activities and solutions to wildlife habitat problems are offered in more than 850 comments. These include: plant windbreaks for habitat--186 comments; develop wildlife areas--44; reimburse landowners for preserving wildlife--56; provide technical assistance for streambelt corridors; prevent dam construction that destroys habitat--145; stop clearcutting forests--99; tax hunters--57; sow switchgrass--9; protect streams from livestock and clearing--47; encourage conservation practices that benefit wildlife in general--192; prevent cruelty to animals--25.

One farm organization objects to the statement that habitat quality is higher in ungrazed forests than in grazed forests. Another respondent points out that drainage of agricultural lands benefits wildlife habitat.

In 333 comments, half of them from local units of government, respondents express opposition to efforts to preserve habitat. The comments say that USDA should concentrate on agriculture, not wildlife, and 89 say that the federal government should take no more land for wildlife habitat. In 122 comments, respondents call for better communication between wildlife interests and agricultural interests. Fencing out wildlife to ensure enough forage for livestock is expensive, notes one response.

> [The public as a whole gives moderate support to the preservation of wildlife habitat in general. The Harris survey did not specifically address wetland retention. Of those sampled, 61 percent said that they benefited a fair amount to a great deal from the federal government's efforts to protect fish and wildlife habitat, 23 percent said that they benefited just some, and 13 percent said they benefited hardly at all. When asked to distribute $100 among areas of natural resource concerns, those sampled allocated $13.30 to fish and wildlife habitat, ranking it fifth among the six resource concerns.]

.Flood Damage Control Activities

Structural measures to control runoff from large storms and prevent flooding, especially in urban areas, are favored in 757 comments. These comments mention building more dams and levees for flood control. Nonstructural measures such as regulation and flood insurance are suggested in 425 comments, and 32 others (including 5 from environmental groups) say that structural measures compound ecological problems. Half of those supporting nonstructural measures are individuals; 17 percent represent the federal government; 15 percent. local government; 9 percent, environmental groups; and 6 percent, state governments. Half of the comments are on structured response forms, and one-third are in personal letters.

Reducing flood damages is given high priority in 166 comments, medium priority in 30 comments, and low priority in 49 comments.

> [Those sampled in the Harris survey expressed support for reducing flood damages by nonstructural measures. Of those sampled, 81 percent said they thought the federal government should discourage building in flood-prone areas. Only 15 percent said that this is not a proper function of government.

In another question, 21 percent said that they had benefited a great deal from the efforts of the federal government in helping to minimize flood damage in rural areas, 30 percent said they benefited a fair amount, and 22 percent just some. Twenty-two percent said that they had hardly benefited at all, and 4 percent were not sure. When asked to allocate $100 among six areas of natural resource concerns, those surveyed allocated $12.70 to reducing flood damages. This is slightly less than was allocated to any of the other resource concerns.]

Energy Conservation and Production Activities

Shelterbelts.--Seventy-seven responses favor encouraging establishment of shelterbelts and making destruction of shelterbelts illegal.

Biomass, methane, and alcohol.--Forty-five responses suggest using forest biomass for energy production, but 68 express disapproval of or reservations about using crop residues for this purpose. Although 378 comments favor agricultural production of alcohol or gasohol, three commodity groups say the production of methane from manure or of alcohol from grain for use in gasohol is impractical. Comments favoring gasohol or alcohol production were received on structured forms (52 percent) and in personal letters and nonstructured forms (42 percent). Sixty-eight percent are from individuals, and 28 percent are from various levels of government. If energy resources are found, one individual says, fish and wildlife resources should be relocated so that the energy resources can be used.

Research needs and newer energy forms.--On generally related energy topics, 268 comments say that studies on energy-saving conservation methods are needed. These are from a variety of sources, including individuals; local, state, and federal government; and environmental, civic, and farm organizations. Personal letters and nonstructured forms account for 37 percent of these; petitions and form letters, for 37 percent; and structured forms, for 26 percent. The difficulty of decreasing energy use while increasing food and fiber production is pointed out in 79 comments. More than 450 comments mention use of solar, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal, nuclear, and biological energy; marsh gas; synthetic fuels; energy source diversification; methane; ethanol; hydrogen; dried sewage; and waste heat. But one environmental group says: "Even widely-touted gasohol is impractical until the demands for nonrenewable fossil fuel, both to produce the cereal grains and push the fermentation and distillation, are reduced drastically."

Related Resource Activities

Organic fertilizer.--Use of organic fertilizer is favored in 292 comments, some of which suggest eliminating fertilizer requirements from cost sharing programs. Another 95 suggest leaving organic residue on fields over the winter. Proponents of using organic fertilizer include individuals--70 percent; local government--13 percent; federal government--7 percent; environmental groups--4 percent; state governments--3 percent; and civic, farm,

agricultural, industrial, and other groups--3 percent. Fifty-seven percent of these comments are on structured response forms, and 42 percent are in personal letters or nonstructured forms.

Technology transfer.--More than 70 comments call for increased emphasis on technology transfer, and 17 of these specifically mention education as a means of technology transfer. Others call for increasing funds to conservation districts for technology transfer and improving training of field personnel. Nine favor maintaining the present level of technology transfer. Eight respondents say that the responsibility for technology transfer rests with all levels of government, 3 say that it rests with federal and state governments together; 1, with state and local governments together; 2, with local government alone; 1, with state government alone; and 3, with the federal government alone. Negative responses to technology transfer include: concern or alarm--2; inadequate--2; disagreement--1; and unnecessary--1.

Waste management systems.--Fifty respondents mention waste management systems as a method of reducing water pollution. Municipal sewage used as fertilizer should be continuously monitored to detect toxics and heavy metals, according to 39 comments. State regulations to control sediment are favored in 293 comments. Another 21 comments suggest ways of reducing sediment. Recycling solid waste, plastic, metal, radioactive waste, wood, paper, and waste water is favored in 143 comments from a variety of sources.

Other Resource Activities

A number of comments call for programs or practices that are not listed as activities in the RCA documents.

Drainage of wet soils.--Drainage needs are mentioned in 1,536 comments, some of which call for improved forest management or improved management of existing dams. Individuals submitted 66 percent of these comments, and units of local government sent 20 percent. The degree of drainage affects the extent to which public and private programs are carried out, note 59 comments.

Other practices, programs, and policies.--Many comments call for establishment of new programs or policies. These include:

	Number of comments
Establish a program to reduce nonpoint pollution	156
Retain prime farmland, but also assist those who are farming nonprime land	91
Encourage mine reclamation to farmland rather than to original contour	56
Establish state technical libraries	28
Study conservation solutions in other countries	15
Encourage urban forestry	2

Establish a program to control insects such as black flies, mosquitoes, gnats, fire ants, and pine bark beetles; birds such as blackbirds, wild geese, and swans; animals such as nutria, deer, coyotes, muskrats, beavers, and gophers; and plants such as kudzu---------- 117

Concern about loss of prime farmland is cited in 661 comments, and 64 comments (322 signatures) say that nonprime land should also be protected.

A number of comments suggest specific practices: use of riprap--166 comments; use of prairie plants, oxidation ponds, and drill planting in narrow rows--12 comments; and widening old roads instead of buying new rights of way--59 comments. Practices should have an assigned life span, note 88 comments. One comment opposes interbasin transfer of water. Another, from a federal agency, expresses reservations on combining crawfish and rice production.

A citizen from Lincoln, Nebraska, calls attention to the failure of RCA to address activities related to cultural values such as historical and scenic resources. Because living standards will not rise as quickly in terms of material goods in the future, he says, people will demand that such "intangibles" as scenic resources and other "quality" goods and resources be available.

Channelization.--Although channelization was not listed as an activity to accomplish an objective, 231 comments bearing 640 signatures express opinions on this practice. Of these, 136 comments bearing 526 signatures favor permitting channelization to protect land where is this economically feasible and 85 comments oppose channelization. Ten comments point out that the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Delaware Fish and Wildlife Service use channelization. Responses on channelization come from the following sources:

Respondent type	Favor channelization	Oppose channelization
Academic	--	3
Agribusiness	--	1
Civic/social	--	3
Environmental	1	12
Farm organizations	1	3
Federal government	10	7
Individuals	101	32
Local government	21	16
State government	2	7
Other	--	1
Total	136	85

Implementing Conservation Activities

Cost sharing.--Many responses deal with cost sharing to accomplish specific activities. Of these, 5,551 comments (9,007 signatures) suggest providing or increasing cost sharing. Of these, 45 percent come from the South, 30 per-

cent from the Midwest, 16 percent from the Northeast, and 9 percent from the West. Personal letters account for 39 percent of these suggestions, 31 percent are from structured response forms, and 15 percent are petitions. Individuals provide 76 percent of these comments, and units of government provide 20 percent, as follows: federal--7 percent, state--2 percent, and local--11 percent. Cost sharing is suggested for drainage, lime, land leveling, underground irrigation systems, no-till, tile, fencing, water impoundment reservoirs, seeding steep slopes and critical areas, long-term vegetative cover, erosion control, maintaining timber stands, wildlife habitat, chemical fallow, animal waste disposal, pollution control, fertilizer, corncribs, crop drying structures, removal of thornapple trees, seeding of marginal land, crop damage from wildlife, maintenance of grass, road repair, conversion of seasonally flooded cropland to grass or forest, pasture clearing, loss of land due to wetland classification, livestock watering facilities, waterways, setaside acres, class VI and VII land, and other permanent practices.

Respondents make 231 comments calling for elimination of cost sharing for some or all purposes and 44 suggesting that cost sharing be limited to 50 percent. More than 200 comments, half of which are from the Midwest, say that cost sharing programs are discriminatory; of these, individuals account for 82 percent and local governments for 10 percent.

Funding.--Of the comments relating to "who pays for conservation activities," a high proportion says that the federal government should pay 50 percent or more of the cost of conservation practices, that landusers should pay the next largest share, and that state and local governments should pay the least. Table 6-1 shows how many comments favor each option.

Comments about the federal government's share most frequently say that this share should be more than 50 percent of the cost of conservation. Comments about the share to be borne by state or local government or by individual landusers, on the other hand, most frequently say that this share should be less than 50 percent.

> [The Harris survey shows that by more than 5 to 1 the public feels that it is proper for the federal government to grant money to farmers and other landowners so that they can protect their soil and water (78 percent to 14 percent). (Seventy-two percent of the responses to the RCA drafts that address the issue say that this is a proper role for local, state, or federal government.) The Harris survey also shows that only 4 percent of the public thinks that requiring farmers to pay the entire cost of conservation practices is the best approach to a national soil and water conservation program. (Almost 4 percent of the respondents to the RCA drafts who address the issue seem to share this position. See table 6-1.)]

Table 6-1.--Who should pay for conservation activities?

Payer	Comments saying a proper share is-- Less than 50 percent	50 percent	More than 50 percent	Total
Federal government	304	314	951	1,569
State government	426	68	59	553
Local government	271	32	43	346
Landuser	505	309	132	946

Technical assistance.--The need for more technical assistance for activities in all resource areas is mentioned in 5,186 comments (18,232 signatures), more than any other comment dealing with activities. More than half of these come from the South. Individuals submitted 75 percent of these comments, local government 12 percent, and the federal government 8 percent. These comments represent the following types of responses: personal letter, 34 percent; petition, 28 percent; structured response form, 26 percent; and nonstructured response form, 11 percent. Only 29 comments oppose extending assistance. Many of these comments were directed to soil resources or to soil and water resources together.

Poor quality of technical assistance is mentioned in 69 comments. Decreases in service and assistance are seen as causing increased soil loss by 12 respondents. Shortage of technical and financial assistance to Indian lands is cited in 6 comments from the Midwest. A need for information on practices in special areas is identified in 101 comments. Increasing technical assistance to foreign countries is suggested by 80 comments. Technical assistance in the form of model projects and demonstration farms is favored by 189 comments, mostly from the South. Technical assistance is requested by 144 respondents. The need for economic information as well as technical information is expressed in 958 comments from individuals, units of government, academicians, and farm, environmental, and commodity organizations. Conservation plans should be the basis of Best Management Practices, according to 141 comments. Landowners receiving assistance should be required to carry out the conservation plan, according to 168 comments.

Research and technology development.--More than 3,000 comments (9,553 signatures), two-thirds of them from the South, identify a need for more research on many subjects, including sediment delivery ratios, crop genetics, new plant species, conservation tillage, returns on conservation practices, sprinkler irrigation systems, shelterbelts, conversion of crops to energy, efficient uses of organic wastes, fuel-efficient equipment, insect and disease control, energy use, and soil and water management. Many of these comments are in form letters or petitions that make a general request for research on conservation practices but do not name a particular practice. A member of a conservation district organization research committee proposes adding the following activities:

- o Strengthen research on erosion control.
- o Improve USLE for western and Delta states.
- o Expand research on mechanics of erosion and sediment transport.

- o Expand research on irrigation, including infiltration rates, available water capacity, erosion potentials, fertilization requirements, and sprinkler irrigation systems.
- o Increase research on land application of sewage sludge.

Nearly 3,000 comments, 97 percent of which are from the South, deal with the public's general rating on technology development. These are:

	Number of Comments	Percentage of comments
Very high general rating	1,136	39
High general rating	834	28
Medium general rating	526	18
Low general rating	221	8
Very low general rating	212	7
Total	2,929	100

In another structured form, 187 responses bearing 824 signatures express opinions on the propriety of technology development as a conservation objective. These responses are:

	Percentage of 187 responses	Percentage of 824 signatures
Strongly agree	20	9
Agree	62	73
Neutral	10	12
Disagree	5	4
Strongly disagree	2	*
No opinion	1	2
Total	100	100

* Less than 0.5 percent.

In addition, 95 comments, mostly from the South, call for expanding or improving technology development and 47, mostly from the West, say improved technology development is needed to reduce damages to resources. Twenty comments call for increased funding for technology development.

Administration.--A number of general comments say USDA needs to administer current practices more effectively, concentrate on permanent practices, and align priorities according to implementation costs. Farmers cannot afford to install conservation practices, according to 269 comments.

Summary

Response to the activities proposed to meet the objectives is resoundingly positive. Many people express enthusiasm for the Department's efforts to encourage land users to conserve soil and water resources by traditional as well as innovative practices and policies.

Response is most favorable for conservation tillage, drainage activities, erosion control measures, and structural flood control. Least popular are wetland retention policies and data collection methods, which are criticized by a number of respondents. The activities most often mentioned, however, are technical assistance, agricultural research, and erosion control measures.

A number of respondents identify practices or suggest policies that are not included as activities but would help to achieve the objectives. Others identify areas of conflict between various objectives.

Respondents say that land users are conservation minded and sincerely want to be good land stewards; what they desire from the Department of Agriculture is cooperation and assistance in carrying out that desire. A proper role of government, they say, is to help the individual farmer do things he cannot do for himself, by providing research, technical assistance, and economic information, and by providing cost sharing for practices that benefit society but yield little or no short-term economic return. Despite changes in structure and land tenure, many do expect their children to inherit the land, and others express real concern over future generations even if they do not expect their own children to be farmers. The distaste for regulation of conservation practices seems to be related to the idea that farmers and government should be a mutually beneficial partnership. In a partnership, one party does not regulate the other.

The thrust of the public's reaction to the activities in the RCA documents is this: the activities are worthwhile and should be carried out, but this can only be done if land users and government cooperate in the interest of conservation. A Kentucky farmer puts it this way: "Congress cannot effectively legislate conservation. The only way conservation can be achieved is for the government to cooperate with the farmers."

Chapter 7 - Proposed Alternative Strategies for Conserving Soil and Water Resources

This chapter summarizes comments on the seven alternative strategies that the Department of Agriculture presented in the RCA draft documents. These strategies are outlined in chapter 4, section E, of the draft Program Report and Environmental Impact Statement and are discussed in part V of the Summary. This chapter shows the relative acceptability of each strategy among those who commented on the RCA drafts. The strategies are discussed here in the same order as they appear in the RCA documents.

The Scope of the Response

Nationwide, 765,759 comments deal with the alternative strategies. Forty percent are from the South region, 40 percent from the Midwest, 12 percent from the West, and 8 percent from the Northeast. Comments came in the following forms:

Form of response	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Structured response form	703,300	92
Personal letter	30,658	4
Nonstructured response form	15,354	2
Petition	15,572	2
Public transcript	771	*
Soil and water conservation districts' long range plans	18	*
Other	86	*
Total	765,759	100

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Most of those who commented on strategies, 68 percent, are individuals, most of whom do not identify themselves by occupation or affiliation. Nine percent represent various organizations and interest groups related to agriculture. Twenty-three percent identify themselves as farmers or ranchers and mention no other affiliation. Tables in this chapter presenting the view of farmers and ranchers include comments from this 23 percent only.

The following sections of this chapter show the distribution of comments on each strategy. Each section shows--

- o the extent of the interested public's support for or opposition to the strategy.
- o the respondents' perception of each strategy's potential effectiveness.
- o reasons why the respondents like or dislike the strategy.
- o a compilation of overall preference.

Tables 7-1 and 7-2 summarize all respondents' support for and opposition to the strategies; tables 7-3 and 7-4 show the breakdown of support and opposition among those who identify themselves as farmers or ranchers. Farmers and ranchers tend to look less favorably upon all strategies. However, the tables show similar patterns of support and opposition. Tables 7-5 and 7-6

Table 7-1.--Summary of support for or opposition to the alternative strategies, with percentage distribution for each alternative strategy

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	31,919	48	21,745	32	5,593	8	8,207	12	67,464	100
Cross compliance--	17,930	26	15,652	23	18,994	26	16,376	24	68,952	100
Regional projects-	16,787	27	17,974	29	10,935	18	15,849	26	61,545	100
State leadership--	17,181	27	15,500	24	14,465	23	16,577	26	63,723	100
Regulation--------	12,420	18	12,472	19	23,659	35	18,784	28	67,335	100
Bonuses-----------	29,364	46	16,746	26	7,507	12	10,225	16	63,842	100
Contracts---------	20,517	33	14,886	24	12,137	19	14,940	24	62,480	100

Source: table 7-11.

7-2

Table 7-2.--Summary of support for or opposition to the alternative strategies, with percentage distribution by degree of support or opposition

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	31,919	22	21,745	19	5,593	6	8,207	8	67,464	15
Cross compliance--	17,930	12	15,652	14	18,994	20	16,376	16	68,952	15
Regional projects-	16,787	11	17,974	16	10,935	12	15,849	16	61,545	13
State leadership--	17,181	12	15,500	13	14,465	16	16,577	16	63,723	14
Regulation--------	12,420	9	12,472	11	23,659	25	18,784	19	67,335	15
Bonuses-----------	29,364	20	16,746	14	7,507	8	10,225	10	63,842	14
Contracts---------	20,517	14	14,886	13	12,137	13	14,940	15	62,480	14
Total--------	146,118	100	114,975	100	93,290	100	100,958	100	455,341	100

Source: table 7-11.

Table 7-3.--Summary of support for or opposition to the alternative strategies among farmers and ranchers, with percentage distribution for each alternative strategy

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	5,965	43	4,453	32	1,515	11	1,898	14	13,831	100
Cross compliance--	2,823	19	2,530	17	5,762	40	3,414	24	14,529	100
Regional projects-	2,847	23	3,176	26	3,030	25	3,254	26	12,307	100
State leadership--	3,218	25	2,800	22	3,646	29	3,037	24	12,701	100
Regulation--------	2,218	16	2,157	16	6,108	44	3,384	24	13,867	100
Bonuses-----------	5,452	43	3,078	24	1,980	16	2,148	17	12,658	100
Contracts---------	3,837	31	2,650	21	3,030	24	2,933	24	12,450	100

Source: table 7-12.

7-3

Table 7-4.--Summary of support for or opposition to the alternative strategies among farmers and ranchers, with percentage distribution by degree of support or opposition

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	5,965	22	4,453	21	1,515	6	1,898	9	13,831	15
Cross compliance--	2,823	11	2,530	12	5,762	23	3,414	17	14,529	16
Regional projects-	2,847	11	3,176	15	3,030	12	3,254	16	12,307	13
State leadership--	3,218	12	2,800	14	3,646	15	3,037	15	12,701	14
Regulation--------	2,218	8	2,157	10	6,108	24	3,384	17	13,867	15
Bonuses-----------	5,452	21	3,078	15	1,980	8	2,148	11	12,658	14
Contracts---------	3,837	15	2,650	13	3,030	12	2,933	15	12,450	13
Total--------	26,360	100	20,844	100	25,071	100	20,068	100	92,343	100

Source: table 7-12.

Table 7-5.--Summary of comments predicting the effectiveness of the alternative strategies, with percentage distribution for each alternative strategy

Alternative strategy	Very high effectiveness		Effective		Very low or low effectiveness		Ineffective		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	4,200	23	10,134	55	1,014	5	3,109	17	18,457	100
Cross compliance--	2,538	14	8,289	46	1,740	10	5,372	30	17,939	100
Regional projects-	1,850	11	9,233	53	1,663	9	4,644	27	17,390	100
State leadership--	1,797	10	7,702	44	2,503	14	5,717	32	17,719	100
Regulation--------	2,036	12	6,780	39	2,419	14	6,143	35	17,378	100
Bonuses-----------	4,886	27	9,650	54	784	4	2,595	15	17,915	100
Contracts---------	3,489	20	8,408	48	1,403	8	4,275	24	17,575	100

Source: table 7-13.

Table 7-6.--Summary of comments predicting the effectiveness of alternative strategies with percentage distribution by predicted degree of effectiveness

Alternative strategy	Very high effectiveness		Effective		Very low or low effectiveness		Ineffective		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	4,200	20	10,134	17	1,014	9	3,109	10	18,457	15
Cross compliance--	2,538	12	8,289	14	1,740	15	5,372	17	17,939	14
Regional projects-	1,850	9	9,233	15	1,663	14	4,644	15	17,390	14
State leadership--	1,797	9	7,702	13	2,503	22	5,717	18	17,719	14
Regulation--------	2,036	10	6,780	11	2,419	21	6,143	19	17,378	14
Bonuses-----------	4,886	23	9,650	16	784	7	2,595	8	17,915	15
Contracts---------	3,489	17	8,408	14	1,403	12	4,275	13	17,575	14
Total--------	20,796	100	60,196	100	11,526	100	31,855	100	124,373	100

Source: table 7-13.

Table 7-7.--Summary of comments from farmers and ranchers predicting the effectiveness of the alternative strategies, with percentage distribution for each alternative strategy

Alternative strategy	Very high effectiveness		Effective		Very low or low effectiveness		Ineffective		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	830	23	1,899	51	243	7	716	19	3,688	100
Cross compliance--	357	10	1,373	38	432	12	1,426	40	3,588	100
Regional projects-	307	9	1,637	47	396	11	1,173	33	3,513	100
State leadership--	329	9	1,500	42	450	13	1,267	36	3,546	100
Regulation--------	334	10	1,144	33	462	14	1,486	43	3,426	100
Bonuses-----------	921	26	1,827	51	185	5	650	18	3,583	100
Contracts---------	681	19	1,546	44	323	9	965	28	3,515	100

Source: table 7-14.

7-5

Table 7-8.--Summary of comments from farmers and ranchers predicting the effectiveness of the alternative strategies, with percentage distribution by predicted degree of effectiveness

Alternative strategy	Very high effectiveness		Effective		Very low or low effectiveness		Ineffective		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting-------	830	22	1,899	17	243	10	716	9	3,688	15
Cross compliance--	357	9	1,373	13	432	17	1,426	19	3,588	15
Regional projects-	307	8	1,637	15	396	16	1,173	15	3,513	14
State leadership--	329	9	1,500	14	450	18	1,267	17	3,546	14
Regulation--------	334	9	1,144	10	462	19	1,486	19	3,426	14
Bonuses-----------	921	25	1,827	17	185	7	650	8	3,583	14
Contracts---------	681	18	1,546	14	323	13	965	13	3,515	14
Total--------	3,759	100	10,926	100	2,491	100	7,683	100	24,859	100

Source: table 7-14.

Table 7-9.--Summary of support for and opposition to alternative strategies, by RCA region

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Redirecting present conservation programs:										
Northeast	2,572	47	1,883	34	431	8	636	11	5,522	100
Midwest	12,612	47	8,579	32	1,791	7	3,622	14	26,604	100
South	12,924	48	9,158	34	2,298	8	2,761	10	27,141	100
West	3,775	47	2,093	26	1,168	14	1,065	13	8,101	100
Cross compliance:										
Northeast	1,768	32	1,388	25	1,103	20	1,277	23	5,536	100
Midwest	7,904	29	7,088	25	6,276	22	6,668	24	27,936	100
South	6,186	23	5,418	20	9,055	34	6,286	23	26,945	100
West	2,059	24	1,726	21	2,528	30	2,121	25	8,434	100
Regional resource project approach:										
Northeast	1,591	32	1,568	32	686	14	1,106	22	4,951	100
Midwest	7,063	28	7,989	32	3,566	14	6,507	26	25,125	100
South	5,892	25	6,386	27	5,268	22	6,284	26	23,830	100
West	2,220	29	2,007	27	1,394	18	1,935	26	7,556	100
State leadership:										
Northeast	1,549	30	1,348	26	915	18	1,324	26	5,136	100
Midwest	8,317	32	7,265	28	4,353	17	5,974	23	25,909	100
South	5,055	20	4,919	20	7,580	31	7,333	29	24,887	100
West	2,235	29	1,943	25	1,599	21	1,921	25	7,698	100

Table 7-9.--Summary of support for and opposition to alternative strategies, by RCA region--Continued

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Regulatory emphasis:										
Northeast----------	1,186	22	1,156	21	1,514	27	1,645	30	5,501	100
Midwest----------	5,837	22	5,830	22	7,064	27	7,753	29	26,484	100
South----------	3,914	14	4,060	15	12,111	45	6,933	26	27,018	100
West----------	1,473	18	1,403	17	2,924	35	2,434	30	8,234	100
Conservation performance bonus:										
Northeast----------	2,395	46	1,481	29	509	10	794	15	5,179	100
Midwest----------	12,729	49	7,016	27	2,461	9	4,004	15	26,210	100
South----------	10,695	44	6,166	25	3,529	14	4,093	17	24,483	100
West----------	3,508	44	2,048	26	994	13	1,323	17	7,873	100
Natural resource contracts:										
Northeast----------	1,621	33	1,163	23	925	19	1,246	25	4,955	100
Midwest----------	8,871	35	6,612	26	3,709	15	6,159	24	25,351	100
South----------	7,498	31	5,265	22	5,997	24	5,641	23	24,401	100
West----------	2,501	33	1,822	24	1,484	19	1,875	24	7,682	100

Source: tables 7-23 through 7-50.

Table 7-10.--Summary of support for and opposition to alternative strategies, by RCA region with percentage distribution by degree of support or opposition

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		All comments	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Northeast region:										
Redirecting present conservation programs	2,572	20	1,883	19	431	7	636	8	5,522	15
Cross compliance	1,768	14	1,388	14	1,103	18	1,277	16	5,536	15
Regional resource project approach	1,591	13	1,568	16	686	11	1,106	14	4,951	13
State leadership	1,549	12	1,348	13	915	15	1,324	16	5,136	14
Regulatory emphasis	1,186	9	1,156	11	1,514	25	1,645	21	5,501	15
Conservation performance bonus	2,395	19	1,481	15	509	9	794	10	5,179	14
Natural resource contracts	1,621	13	1,163	12	925	15	1,246	15	4,955	14
Total	12,682	100	9,987	100	6,083	100	8,028	100	36,780	100
Midwest region:										
Redirecting present conservation programs	12,612	20	8,579	17	1,791	6	3,622	9	26,604	15
Cross compliance	7,904	13	7,088	14	6,276	21	6,668	16	27,936	15
Regional resource project approach	7,063	11	7,989	16	3,566	12	6,507	16	25,125	14
State leadership	8,317	13	7,265	14	4,353	15	5,974	15	25,909	14
Regulatory emphasis	5,837	9	5,830	12	7,064	24	7,753	19	26,484	14
Conservation performance bonus	12,729	20	7,016	14	2,461	9	4,004	10	26,210	14
Natural resource contracts	8,871	14	6,612	13	3,709	13	6,159	15	25,351	14
Total	63,333	100	50,379	100	29,220	100	40,687	100	183,619	100

Table 7-10.--Summary of support for and opposition to alternative strategies, by RCA region with percentage distribution by degree of support or opposition--Continued

Alternative strategy	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		All comments	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
South region:										
Redirecting present conservation programs	12,924	25	9,158	22	2,298	5	2,761	7	27,141	15
Cross compliance	6,186	12	5,418	13	9,055	20	6,286	16	26,945	15
Regional resource project approach	5,892	11	6,386	15	5,268	11	6,284	16	23,830	13
State leadership	5,055	10	4,919	12	7,580	17	7,333	19	24,887	14
Regulatory emphasis	3,914	7	4,060	10	12,111	26	6,933	18	27,018	15
Conservation performance bonus	10,695	21	6,166	15	3,529	8	4,093	10	24,483	14
Natural resource contracts	7,498	14	5,265	13	5,997	13	5,641	14	24,401	14
Total	52,164	100	41,372	100	45,838	100	39,331	100	178,705	100
West region:										
Redirecting present conservation programs	3,775	21	2,093	16	1,168	10	1,065	9	8,101	14
Cross compliance	2,059	12	1,726	13	2,528	21	2,121	17	8,434	15
Regional resource project approach	2,220	12	2,007	15	1,394	12	1,935	15	7,556	14
State leadership	2,235	13	1,943	15	1,599	13	1,921	15	7,698	14
Regulatory emphasis	1,473	8	1,403	11	2,924	24	2,434	19	8,234	15
Conservation performance bonus	3,508	20	2,048	16	994	8	1,323	10	7,873	14
Natural resource contracts	2,501	14	1,822	14	1,484	12	1,875	15	7,682	14
Total	17,771	100	13,042	100	12,091	100	12,674	100	55,578	100

Source: tables 7-23 through 7-50.

summarize how effective all respondents predict the strategies would be; tables 7-7 and 7-8 show how effective those who identify themselves as farmers and ranchers predict the strategies would be. Again, farmers and ranchers are less enthusiastic than other respondents. Although farmers and ranchers rated each strategy less effective than did other respondents, the ranking of all strategies' effectiveness is similar. Tables 7-9 and 7-10 show regional breakdowns of all respondents' support and opposition.

Table 7-11 summarizes all comments that express support or opposition without elaboration; table 7-12 summarizes all such comments from farmers and ranchers. Table 7-13 summarizes all comments that express opinions on the strategies' effectiveness; table 7-14 summarizes all such comments from farmers and ranchers. Table 7-15 arrays the strategies by ratings assigned by all respondents; table 7-16 shows how farmers and ranchers rate the strategies. The percentages shown in each of these tables represent a fraction of all comments on each individual strategy. Tables 7-17 through 7-22 are derived from these tables. They rank the strategies by number of comments. These tables and all other tables referred to in the rest of this chapter appear in a block of tables, beginning on page 7-27.

Redirecting Present Conservation Programs

Under this strategy, USDA would continue its existing programs under present authorities but with adjustments. It would emphasize coordination and integration of program planning and evaluation. In the adjusted programs, USDA would redirect funds and personnel to accomplish national conservation objectives, establish priorities, and make common workload analyses. Eligibility for assistance in this redirected program would be based on the expected effect such assistance would have on meeting national objectives. Cooperation would continue to be voluntary. The present roles of state and local governments and their responsibilities for providing supplemental funds and personnel would continue.

A total of 114,618 comments bearing 185,368 signatures address redirecting present conservation programs. About 93 percent of all comments on this strategy are shown in tables 7-11, 7-13, and 7-15. As the tables show, about 80 percent support the strategy and 20 percent oppose it. About 78 percent think it would be effective, and 22 percent do not. About 22 percent rank this strategy first among the others. About 7 percent rank it last. Among all strategies, redirecting present conservation programs is the most preferred.

The remaining 7 percent of comments on redirecting present programs give reasons why respondents support or do not support the strategy or recommend other ways of carrying out the strategy. Many respondents like this strategy primarily because it is voluntary, and they express a need for continued voluntary participation. Other respondents who support the strategy request that it be carried out through the existing conservation agencies. These respondents feel that national objectives could be met with the existing program delivery system.

Respondents who are not in favor of redirecting present conservation programs fear that this strategy would tend to divert control of conservation policy away from the state and local levels. They are particularly concerned with maintaining local control.

A few comments favor combining this strategy with others, as follows: with performance bonuses (54 comments), natural resource contracts (12 comments), cross compliance (11 comments), and the regional resource project approach (10 comments). Respondents very often recommend increased program funding and increased cost sharing payments.

All regions favor redirecting present conservation programs. However, respondents from the West are not as strongly in favor of the strategy as are respondents from the other regions. Only 72 percent of the comments from the West are favorable, while 80 percent of the comments from the other regions are favorable.

Among farmers and ranchers, support for this stategy is strong but not quite as strong as support from all respondents. About 75 percent of the comments on this strategy from farmers and ranchers support redirecting present conservation programs, compared to about 80 percent of comments from all respondents, and about 74 percent of the comments from farmers and ranchers say it would be effective, whereas 78 percent of comments from all respondents say so. Farmers and ranchers agree with all respondents in ranking this strategy as their most preferred.

Sixty-seven percent of the comments from environmental organizations and 70 percent of the comments from individuals are favorable. Responses from federal government agencies contain the highest percentage of favorable comments, 86 percent.

> [The Harris survey did not directly address redirecting present programs.]

Tables 7-23 through 7-26 show all comments that indicate support for or opposition to the strategy, by RCA region and type of respondent.

Cross Compliance

Under this strategy, farmers would be required to apply certain conservation measures in accordance with USDA standards in order to qualify for such benefits as commodity price support programs, low-interest loans, cost sharing programs, or crop insurance. Cross compliance provisions could be incorporated into a number of the existing USDA programs. The farmer could be asked to bear the costs of meeting eligibility standards alone or could receive technical and financial assistance. Program assistance might have to be increased under this strategy to ensure participation and accomplishment of objectives.

A total of 109,398 comments bearing 169,820 signatures address cross compliance. About 97 percent of all comments on this strategy are shown in tables 7-11, 7-13, and 7-15. As the tables show, about 49 percent support the

strategy and 51 percent oppose it. About 60 percent say it would be effective, and 40 percent say it would not. Only 16 percent rank this strategy highest. Of the seven strategies, the respondents rank cross compliance fifth.

The remaining 3 percent of the comments on cross compliance express reasons why respondents support or do not support the strategy. Respondents who do not favor cross compliance are concerned about what they think are the restrictive aspects of the strategy, citing "too many regulations," "too much red tape," "too much government involvement and interference," and similar complaints.

Others believe that cross compliance would be "too expensive or costly." They say that the strategy would be very difficult to administer and that "too many government employees" would be required. They think that farmers cannot afford a cross compliance program.

The respondents who support cross compliance recommend that USDA use high price supports, low-interest loans, long-term loans, tax breaks, and investment credits to attract participants. They recommend that the strategy be flexible enough to meet a wide variety of needs and changing economic conditions.

> [When asked about the fairness of the government's requiring farmers and landowners to protect their soil and water in order to qualify for other government help for their farms, 41 percent of those sampled in the Harris survey thought that such action would be fair to both farmers and taxpayers, only 6 percent thought that it would be fair just to farmers, 18 percent thought it would be fair just to taxpayers, and 22 percent thought that it would be fair to neither. Twelve percent were not sure. This action corresponds to the cross compliance alternative strategy in the RCA draft documents. Those surveyed were asked which one or two of eight possible government actions to protect the Nation's soil and water resources they most favored. When these responses were tallied, the action corresponding to the cross compliance strategy ranked fourth.]

Nationally, only 49 percent of the comments expressing support for or opposition to the strategy support it. However, 57 percent of the comments from the Northeast and 54 percent from the Midwest support the strategy. On the other hand, 57 percent of the comments from the South and 55 percent from the West oppose the strategy.

Opposition to the cross compliance strategy is noticeably more pronounced among farmers and ranchers. About 63 percent of the comments on this strategy from farmers and ranchers oppose the strategy, compared to 51 percent from all respondents. Only 48 percent of the comments from farmers and ranchers say that the strategy would be effective, whereas 60 percent of all respondents say that it would. Farmers and ranchers rank cross compliance as the sixth most preferred strategy, whereas all respondents rank it fifth.

A majority of comments from individuals oppose the strategy in all regions except the Northeast region, where support and opposition are equal. Comments from individuals in the South, West, and Midwest regions average 58 percent against the strategy.

Comments from members of environmental groups in all regions mostly support the strategy: 77 percent in the Midwest, 63 percent in the Northeast and West regions, and 56 percent in the South.

Comments from farm organizations in the South and West RCA regions oppose the strategy and those from farm organizations in the Northeast and Midwest support it.

Comments from respondents in the federal government average 60 percent "for" the strategy in all regions.

Tables 7-27 through 7-30 show all comments that indicate support for or opposition to the strategy, by RCA region and type of respondent.

Regional Resource Project Approach

This strategy would use federal, state, and local funds and personnel to address resource problems unique to a region. Federal participation would be available only for programs that help meet proposed national objectives for soil and water conservation. Although many problems could be addressed with existing programs, new authorities would be needed to address some regional problems. Once the objectives of a project had been met, resources would be shifted to address other urgent problems. Plans for projects, which might include parts of several counties or parts of more than one state, would be developed and carried out on a multidisciplinary and interagency basis.

A total of 100,954 comments bearing 158,916 signatures address the regional resource project approach. About 98 percent of all comments on this strategy are shown in tables 7-11, 7-13, and 7-15. As the tables show, about 57 percent of the comments support the strategy and 43 percent oppose it. About 64 percent think it would be effective, and 36 percent do not. About 11 percent rank this strategy highest among all the strategies, and 13 percent rank it last. The regional resource project approach is the fourth most favored strategy overall.

The remaining 2 percent of the comments on regional resource projects give reasons why respondents support or do not support the strategy. Respondents who favor the strategy say it ought to work well when combined with others, then mention "redirecting present conservation programs," "conservation performance bonuses," and "natural resource contracts."

Respondents like the idea of solving the worst problems first, that is, concentrating efforts to complete work on some critical problem areas before moving on to others. Some say the regional nature of the strategy would present an opportunity for more local control. Others want control only at the county or state level because they think that regional control is too broad.

Many respondents who oppose the regional resources project strategy think that regional decisionmaking would encourage "more government involvement," "too much red tape," or "too many government employees." Some respondents fear reductions in the funds and personnel for states and conservation districts

once critical regional priority areas are identified. Others say the strategy is "unrealistic," "not possible," and "politically unacceptable." These respondents believe that the responsibility for resource conservation should rest with state and local governments, not regions.

In all regions, slightly more comments favor regional resource projects than oppose them. The Northeast region has the highest percentage of favorable comments (64 percent). The South has the lowest percentage (52 percent). Environmental organizations in the Northeast have a higher proportion of favorable comments (77 percent) than any other respondent type. Individuals in the South have the highest proportion of unfavorable comments (48 percent).

Among farmers and ranchers, regional resource projects are less enthusiastically supported. Less than half (49 percent) of the comments on this strategy from farmers and ranchers show support, whereas 57 percent of the comments from all respondents show support. Only 55 percent of the comments from farmers and ranchers say that the strategy would be effective, compared to 64 percent from all respondents. However, farmers and ranchers agree with all respondents in ranking this strategy fourth.

Tables 7-31 through 7-34 show all comments that indicate support for or opposition to the strategy, by RCA region and type of respondent.

State Leadership

Under this strategy, states would assume leadership for planning and implementing soil and water conservation programs. State and local governments would--

- o develop state soil and water conservation programs for USDA approval.
- o provide technical assistance to land users.
- o fund those activities that benefit state and local conservation efforts but contribute minimally to national objectives.

The federal government would--

- o ensure that national priorities for soil and water conservation are addressed.
- o establish standards for accomplishing national objectives through the state programs.
- o provide grants to states for conservation activities that are in the best interest of the Nation as a whole but too expensive for individual land users or state and local governments.

The transfer of leadership would occur in accordance with the willingness and readiness of each state.

A total of 103,940 comments bearing 163,144 signatures address state leadership. About 97 percent of all comments on this strategy are shown in tables 7-11, 7-13, and 7-15. As the tables show, about 51 percent support the strategy and 49 percent oppose it. About 54 percent think it would be effective, and 46 percent do not. About 14 percent of the comments that rank this strategy place it highest. More than half of the comments on state leadership give it a medium or higher rating. Among all strategies, however, state leadership is ranked sixth.

The remaining 3 percent of all comments on state leadership cover a variety of reasons why respondents support or do not support the strategy or recommend other ways of carrying out the strategy. The most common favorable comment is that state leadership would eliminate national standards and allow development of standards that relate to local and regional problems. Respondents say that there are too many local and regional differences for national standards to be effective.

A few comments say that state leadership would eliminate federal involvement and red tape. Some favor having states and conservation districts set strategies to be funded by USDA grants. A large group of comments says that state leadership would work well with other strategies in various combinations. Many respondents are against the establishment of a "super conservation agency." They say that state leadership would lead away from this.

Numerous comments expressing opposition to the state leadership strategy say that resource conservation responsibilities should be left with conservation districts and local governments and not with state governments. Many others say that the responsibility for resource conservation programs should be shared by all levels of government. Other respondents recommend no change, saying that the present program is good. Still others comment that the strategy is politically unacceptable.

A few respondents think that state governments lack the needed expertise, funds, and commitment to handle conservation programs without federal assistance. Others say that conservation programs would be in jeopardy without federal assistance.

Many respondents say that increased federal funding for technical assistance in the field, or for a conservation district, would ensure the effectiveness of the state leadership strategy. They recommend maintaining federal assistance even after the state increases assistance. A few respondents suggest that increased cost sharing funds be given to states that provide matching funds.

Although there are slightly more favorable than unfavorable comments nationwide, more comments from the South oppose state leadership (60 percent) than support it. The other regions favor the strategy. Sixty percent of the comments from the Midwest, 56 percent from the Northeast, and 54 percent from the West support the strategy.

Farmers and ranchers generally agree with the other respondents in their comments on state leadership. Just under half (48 percent) of the comments on this strategy from farmers and ranchers support the strategy, whereas just over half (51 percent) of the comments from all respondents support it. About 52 percent of the comments from farmers and ranchers say that the strategy would be effective, compared to 54 percent among all respondents. Farmers and ranchers rank state leadership fifth among the seven strategies, whereas the other respondents rank it sixth.

Comments from individuals in the Northeast are evenly divided between favorable and unfavorable. Comments from environmental groups in the Midwest favor state leadership (70 percent) while comments from environmental groups in the West oppose it (57 percent).

Tables 7-35 through 7-38 show all comments that indicate support for or opposition to the strategy, by RCA region and type of respondent.

Regulatory Emphasis

This strategy would emphasize the use of regulatory authorities at the local, state, and federal levels to carry out a national soil and water conservation program. The regulatory approach would be coupled with a strong conservation assistance program offering incentives for effective resource management. USDA would provide guidance and funding to states to help them implement regulations requiring land users to meet USDA-approved standards. The regulations would be phased in over 20 years. A land user who failed to comply with the regulations might be penalized by a fine or tax or be required to reimburse the government for cost sharing funds or technical assistance received. The burden of complying with regulations would be reduced by significant increases in cost sharing funds, low-interest loans, and technical assistance. USDA would have the primary responsibility for collecting and analyzing data and providing cost sharing and technical assistance. States would have the primary responsibility for maintaining and enforcing the regulations. The exercise of regulatory authority would vary from one resource problem to another, depending on the national significance of the problem and its present and potential adverse impacts.

A total of 106,462 comments bearing 170,375 signatures address the regulatory emphasis. About 95 percent of all comments on this strategy are shown in tables 7-11, 7-13, and 7-15. As the tables show, about 37 percent support the strategy and 63 percent oppose it. About 51 percent say it would be effective, and 49 percent do not. About 12 percent of the comments that rank the strategy place it highest. About 24 percent rank it last. Among all strategies, regulation is the least preferred.

The remaining 5 percent of all comments on the regulatory emphasis cover a variety of reasons why respondents support or do not support the strategy or recommend other ways of carrying out the strategy. Although respondents rank the regulatory emphasis as their least preferred strategy, they still submit many favorable comments. For the most part, respondents in favor of this strategy recommend strong, consistent, nondiscriminatory enforcement at the local level. Some respondents are in favor of shared control by local and state governments. Many say that increased funding is needed to encourage compliance through high financial incentives and more technical assistance. Many respondents say that the regulatory emphasis would work well with other strategies, particularly those offering cost sharing incentives.

Some respondents recommend that conservation measures be required only on lands where conditions adversely affect adjoining property. Others recommend sediment control ordinances for all landowners, not just farmers. Still others want local land use controls to prevent urbanization; these respondents call for more planning and zoning.

More than half of the comments on the regulatory emphasis are unfavorable. Respondents who oppose the strategy think that "dictatorial policies are not needed" or that "mandatory methods are not acceptable in a free society."

These respondents desire less government involvement and interference. They think that the strategy would create more resentment toward the government than exists now. A voluntary conservation program is their main concern. A few respondents provide more explicit comments, such as "RCA smells like the work of a totalitarian bureaucracy," "RCA is a railroad job," and "RCA is the beginning of a national land use plan."

> [Two items on the Harris survey addressed regulatory action by the government in protecting soil and water resources. Those sampled were asked the fairness of the government's requiring farmers and landowners to protect their soil and water with the help of loans and other financial assistance. Fifty-six percent said that this action would be fair to both farmers and taxpayers, 18 percent said it would be fair just to farmers, 5 percent said that it would be fair just to taxpayers, 11 percent said it would be fair to neither, and 9 percent were not sure. This action ranked second on the most favored list.
>
> The other action, unlike the regulatory emphasis strategy, called for the farmer to bear all conservation costs. When those sampled were asked how fair it would be for the government to require farmers and landowners to protect their soil and water without government assistance, only 12 percent said that the action would be fair to both farmers and taxpayers; 32 percent, that it would be fair just to taxpayers; and 40 percent, that it would not be fair to either. Ten percent were not sure. This action was ranked last in the most favored list of those sampled in the Harris survey.]

A majority of the comments from all regions are against regulatory emphasis; however, the Northeast and Midwest are not as strongly opposed as the South and West. Of the comments expressing support or opposition, about 56 percent of those from the Northeast and Midwest oppose the strategy, whereas about 70 percent of the comments from the South and about 65 percent of those from the West oppose it.

Farmers and ranchers oppose the regulatory emphasis even more than other respondents. Sixty-eight percent of the comments on this strategy from farmers and ranchers express opposition, compared to 63 percent among all respondents. Although 51 percent of the comments from all respondents say that the regulatory emphasis would be effective, only 43 percent of the comments from farmers and ranchers say so. Farmers and ranchers, like the other respondents, prefer this strategy least.

Overall, the comments from individuals are strongly opposed to the regulatory emphasis strategy, averaging about 66 percent unfavorable. Environmental groups in the Midwest region are the only group favoring regulatory emphasis. Sixty-four percent of their comments are positive.

Tables 7-39 through 7-42 show all comments that indicate support for or opposition to the strategy, by RCA region and type of respondent.

Conservation Performance Bonus

This strategy would give incentives to land users who voluntarily apply and maintain conservation measures that meet USDA standards. It offers positive incentives without requiring other actions in return. These incentives could be higher commodity price supports, higher cost sharing rates, or more favorable loan interest rates. A conservation agreement would be developed for each farm in order to establish performance standards for certification. These standards could be set nationally or locally. The bonus program would identify and reward conservers. The amount of the bonus would be in direct proportion to the cost of maintaining the conservation system. USDA would give priority attention to problem areas that present the greatest threat to future food and fiber production.

A total of 105,922 comments bearing 166,616 signatures address conservation performance bonuses. About 97 percent of all comments on this strategy are shown in tables 7-11, 7-13, and 7-15. As the tables show, about 72 percent support the strategy and 28 percent oppose it. About 81 percent think it would be effective, and 14 percent do not. About 31 percent of the comments ranking the strategy place it highest. About 9 percent rank it last. Among all strategies, the conservation performance bonus strategy is the second most preferred.

The remaining 3 percent of all comments on conservation performance bonuses present a variety of reasons why respondents support or do not support the strategy or recommend other ways of carrying out the strategy. Respondents who favor conservation performance bonuses cite the high price supports, tax incentives, low-interest loans, long-term loans, and high cost sharing rates inherent in the strategy. These respondents believe that the bonus strategy would work well with other strategies, particularly redirecting present conservation programs. Many respondents like the voluntary nature of the strategy. They express a desire for local control in deciding which incentives would be offered.

Respondents who do not favor this strategy indicate concern that bonuses will only benefit farmers with large operations, who, they say, deserve it least. Others think that bonuses should not be supported by the taxpayers. Many respondents recommend that bonuses be limited to the actual cost of conservation application. Other respondents think that bonuses are an invitation to corruption. They recommend strict audits to avoid windfall profits. Many others think that the program will be impossible to administer, too costly, and discriminatory.

> [Two Harris survey questions directly addressed the conservation performance bonus alternative strategy. One addressed tax incentives and the other, financial bonuses in general. Those sampled reacted almost identically to both. When asked to whom these actions would be fair, 41 to 42 percent thought that they would be fair to both farmers and taxpayers, 24 percent thought they would be fair just to farmers, 4 to 6 percent thought that they would be fair just to taxpayers, and 18 to 19 percent thought that they would be fair to neither. Nine percent were not sure. These two bonus-related actions ranked third among eight on the most favored action list of those sampled in the Harris survey.]

Most comments from all regions express support for the conservation performance bonus strategy. Of comments expressing support or opposition, about 75 percent from the Northeast and Midwest and 70 percent from the South are in favor of the strategy.

Among farmers and ranchers, support for this strategy is strong but not quite as strong as support from the other respondents. About 67 percent of the comments on this strategy from farmers and ranchers support conservation performance bonuses, compared to about 72 percent among all respondents. About 77 percent of the comments from farmers and ranchers say that the strategy would be effective, whereas 81 percent of the comments from all respondents say so. Farmers and ranchers agree with the other respondents in ranking bonuses as their second most preferred strategy.

Environmental groups in the Midwest are the most in favor; 80 percent of their comments express favorable opinions.

Tables 7-43 through 7-46 show all comments that indicate support for or opposition to the strategy, by RCA region and type of respondent.

Natural Resource Contracts

Under this strategy, the public would agree to "purchase" conservation from those who own and operate farms and ranches or otherwise manage natural resources. Payments received through natural resource contracts would be based on price and quantity, just as payments for crops and livestock produced for sale in commodity markets are. A farmer who actually reduces erosion would be paid a flat price per ton of soil saved for each year in which erosion was reduced. Farmers would bear the cost of reducing erosion and solving their resource problems just as they bear the cost of producing commodities. The per ton payment would reflect the value of erosion control to society. Because payments would be tied to the actual solution of natural resource problems, only those farmers operating on problem lands could benefit from participation.

A total of 102,739 comments bearing 161,478 signatures address natural resource contracts. About 97 percent of all comments on this strategy are shown in tables 7-11, 7-13, and 7-15. As the tables show, about 34 percent support the strategy and 43 percent oppose it. About 68 percent think it would be effective, and 32 percent do not. About 22 percent of the comments ranking the strategy place it highest. About 12 percent rank it last. Among all strategies, natural resource contracts is the third most preferred.

The remaining 3 percent of all comments on natural resource contracts cover a variety of reasons why respondents support or do not support the strategy or recommend other ways of carrying out the strategy. Respondents commenting favorably on natural resource contracts think that this strategy would work well with others, especially redirecting present conservation programs and conservation performance bonuses. As they do for other strategies, respondents favor a voluntary program under local control. For this strategy to be effective, they think that high incentives would be needed. Many comments suggest that natural resource contracts could be administered much as the Great Plains Conservation Program is administered. Other comments recommend

concentrating on complete conservation on one farm rather than partial conservation on many.

The most frequent comments opposing this strategy are that it would be impossible to administer, that the strategy involves too much regulation and red tape, and that it is discriminatory. Many comments question the accuracy of the Universal Soil Loss Equation as a standard for conservation payments. Others feel the strategy would lead to corruption and would benefit those who deserve it least.

> [No question in the Harris survey directly addressed natural resource contracts. However, when those sampled were asked how fair it would be for the government to give financial help to farmers and landowners who volunteered to protect their soil and water, only 23 percent said that this action would be fair to both farmers and taxpayers, 46 percent said that it would be fair just to farmers, only 4 percent said that it would be fair just to taxpayers, and 17 percent said that it would be fair to neither. Nine percent were not sure. This action ranked fifth of eight on the most favored action list of those sampled in the Harris survey.]

Of the comments expressing support or opposition, 61 percent from the Midwest region, 56 percent from the Northeast and West, and 52 percent from the South are favorable. Of comments from individuals, 56 percent from the Midwest, 54 percent from the West, and 53 percent from the Northeast support natural resource contracts. However, 51 percent of the comments from individuals in the South oppose the strategy.

Farmers and ranchers support the natural resource contracts strategy somewhat less strongly than the other respondents. About 52 percent of the comments on this strategy from farmers and ranchers show support, compared to 57 percent among all respondents. About 64 percent of the comments from farmers and ranchers say that the strategy would be effective, whereas 68 percent of the comments from all respondents say so. Farmers and ranchers agree with the other respondents in ranking natural resource contracts as their third most preferred strategy.

Tables 7-47 through 7-50 show all comments that indicate support for or opposition to the strategy, by RCA region and type of respondent.

No Change

A total of 1,837 comments bearing 2,265 signatures address the possibility of not changing present USDA conservation programs. Almost all of the comments on this issue favor having things as they are.

> [When asked to rate the fairness of eight possible governmental actions to protect the Nation's soil and water resources, those sampled in the Harris survey ranked first the one that would provide loans (which would have to be repaid in full) and other financial assistance to farmers and other landowners who volunteered to protect their soil and water resources.]

Many comments, however, include suggestions about how the present programs could be improved or expanded. Some of these comments can be summarized as follows:

- Maintain present programs, which can do everything necessary if given proper authority, funding, and personnel.
- Maintain present programs at their present level; the present system is acceptable and responsive to problems and to changes in programs.
- Continue to use present agencies; establish no new agencies, create no "super agency."
- Maintain program responsibility at the local level.
- Maintain the present system because it involves less government interference and regulation than the proposed alternative strategies.
- Maintain the present system because it is less expensive than the proposed alternative strategies.
- Continue voluntary programs.
- Increase funding of present programs to provide more technical assistance and cost sharing.
- Provide additional funding to soil conservation districts.
- Increase the rate of cost sharing.
- Provide more research and development for present programs.
- Give more program responsibility to ASCS and more control to farmers.
- Add tax incentives for conservation to present systems.

No Program

A total of 323 comments bearing 421 signatures address the possibility of having no conservation program. Of those that address this possibility, 70 percent support having no program and 20 percent say that some kind of national program is needed. The remaining 10 percent of the comments do not suggest "for" or "against" opinions but are unfavorable toward present programs or the proposed alternatives.

> [In the Harris survey, 67 percent of those sampled said that landowners and the government should share responsibility for conservation of the land. Only 28 percent said that landowners should have the sole responsibility.]

Of the comments supporting a no program approach, many say that any type of national resource conservation program is meaningless, useless, or unnecessary. Others say that the actions of American farmers already have a positive effect on the land, so further national conservation efforts are no longer needed. Other comments support the view that individual farmers and other landowners should decide what their own conservation needs are. Others say that further conservation efforts are too expensive.

Those respondents expressing support for some kind of national resource conservation program are primarily concerned that having no program would harm the Nation's agriculture. They think that the present programs are acceptable and that farmers cannot afford to carry out a successful conservation effort without government assistance.

The comments not expressing support or opposition express a fear of a new or "super" conservation agency. Others advocate simplifying present policies. They oppose regulatory conservation efforts. A few say that federal employees cannot do the job.

Other/All Strategies

A total of 19,565 comments bearing 25,876 signatures address other or all strategies. These comments do not propose new or different strategies. They do, however, show that those responding desire a national program that--

- o is flexible.
- o requires very little government regulation.
- o is highly subsidized.
- o is inexpensive.
- o is voluntary.
- o is locally controlled.

A few comments indicate that the respondents would consider other alternative resource conservation strategies, but some do not clearly identify what those alternatives might be. Other comments favor all of the proposed alternative strategies but do not identify a preference.

Summary

Redirecting present conservation programs is the most preferred alternative, followed closely by conservation performance bonuses. However, the conservation performance bonus strategy is considered the most effective in achieving conservation goals, followed by redirecting present conservation programs.

RCA respondents consider the regulatory emphasis the least preferred alternative, the least effective, and the lowest in general rating.

RCA respondents rank state leadership sixth, or next to last, in preference, low in effectiveness, and low in general rating. Natural resource contracts rank third by order of preference, medium in effectiveness, and third in general rating. Cross compliance ranks fifth in order of preference, medium in effectiveness, and low in general rating. Regional resource projects rank fourth in order of preference, medium in effectiveness, and third in general rating.

Farmers and ranchers agree with the other respondents in most of the rankings of the strategies. However, farmers and ranchers give a smaller percentage of support to all strategies than do the other respondents. While a majority of comments from all respondents support each strategy but cross compliance and the regulatory emphasis, a majority of comments from farmers and ranchers support only redirecting present programs, conservation performance bonuses, and natural resource contracts.

Table 7-17 and figure 7-1 rank the strategies by degree of support for or opposition to each strategy among all respondents; table 7-18 shows the ranking among those who identify themselves as farmers and ranchers. Table

7-19 and figure 7-2 rank the strategies in terms of all respondents' perception of their probable effectiveness; table 7-20 shows farmers' and ranchers' opinions. Table 7-21 and figure 7-3 display the strategies by general rating assigned by all respondents; table 7-22 shows how farmers and ranchers rank the strategies. The illustrations show the percentage distribution of the comments about each strategy. The tables (and statements of ranking in the text) are based on the total number of comments.

Figure 7-1. – Summary of Comments Expressing Support for or Opposition to the Alternative Strategies

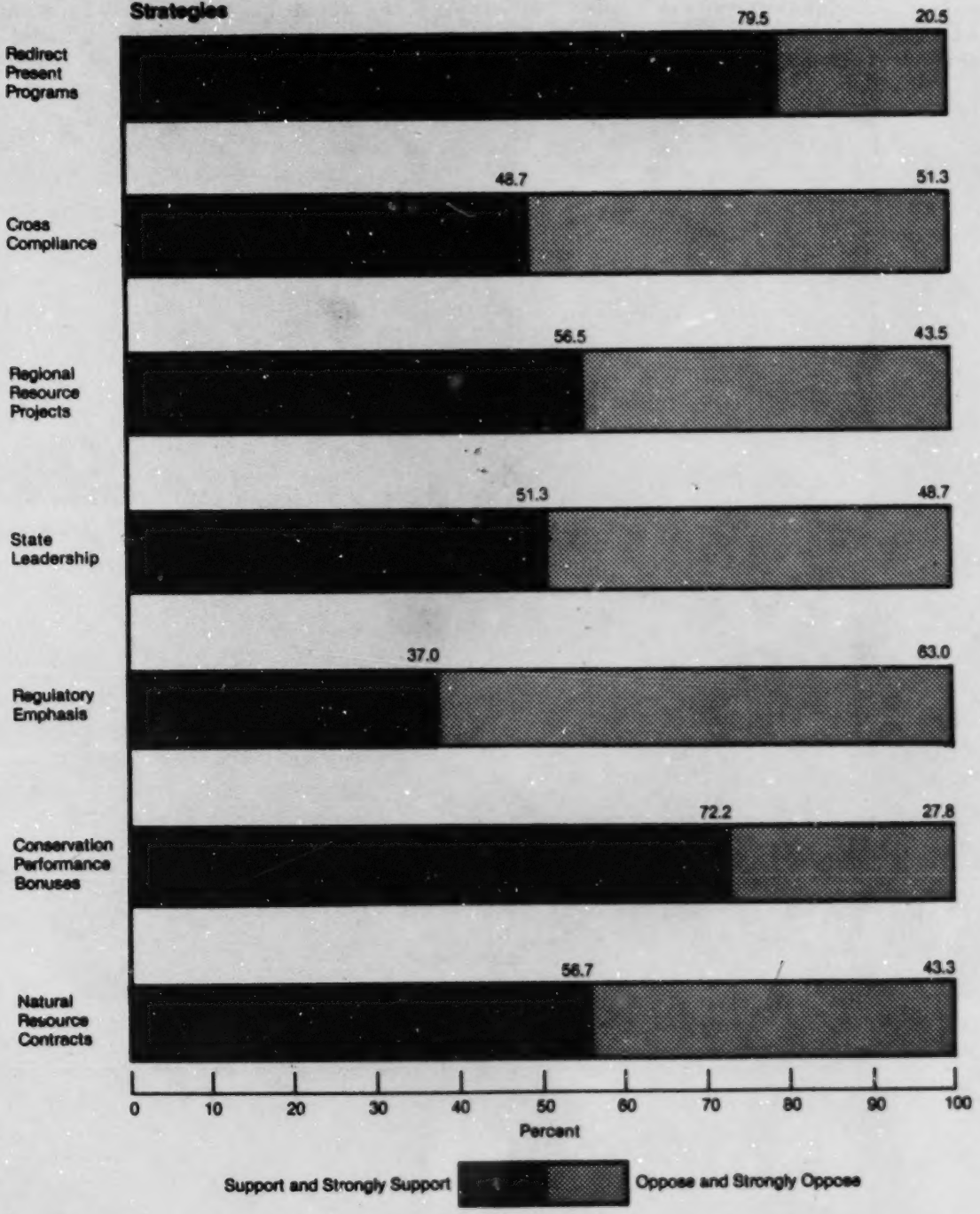


Figure 7-2. – Summary of Comments Predicting the Effectiveness of the Alternative Strategies

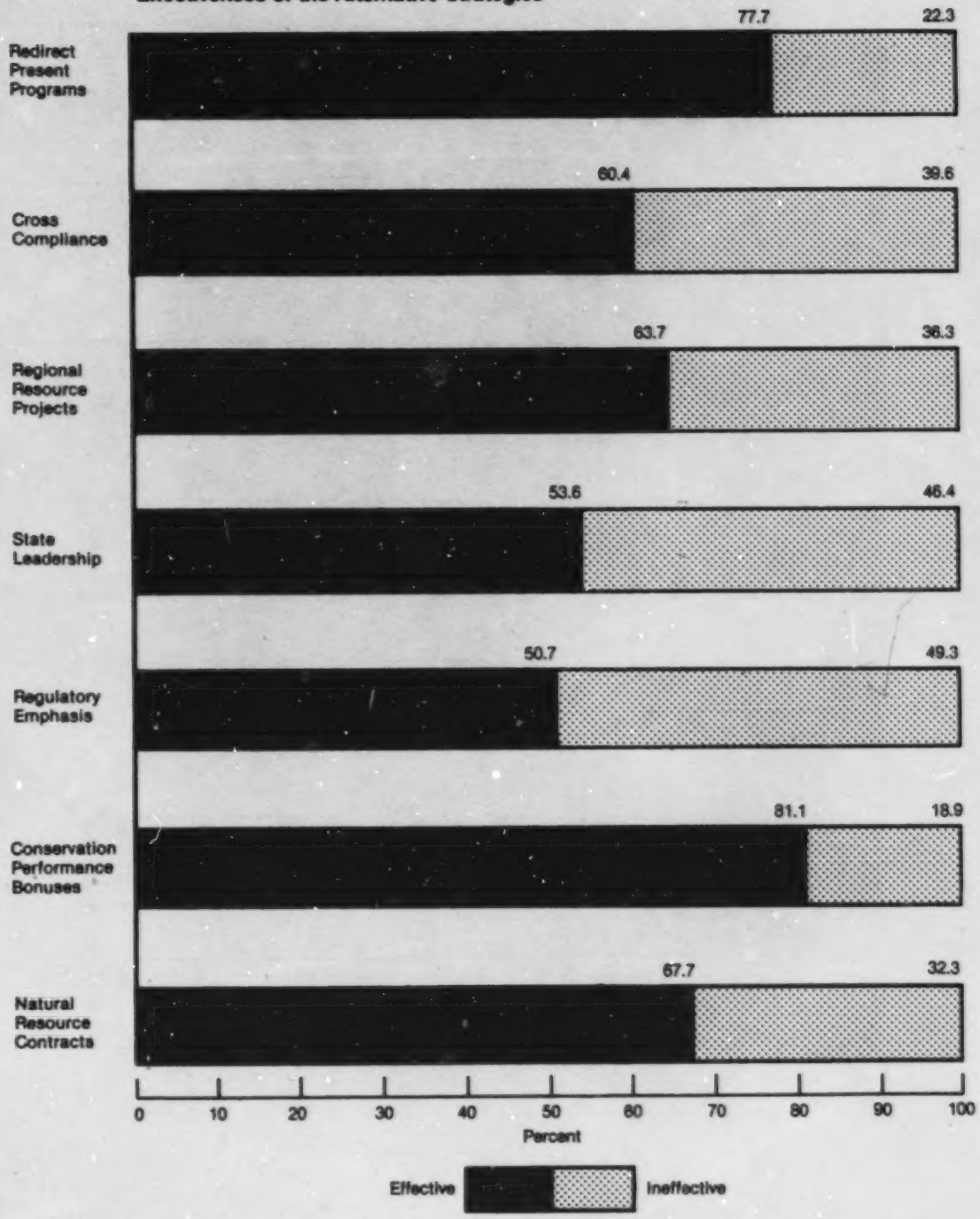


Figure 7-3. – Summary of Comments Assigning General Ratings to the Alternative Strategies

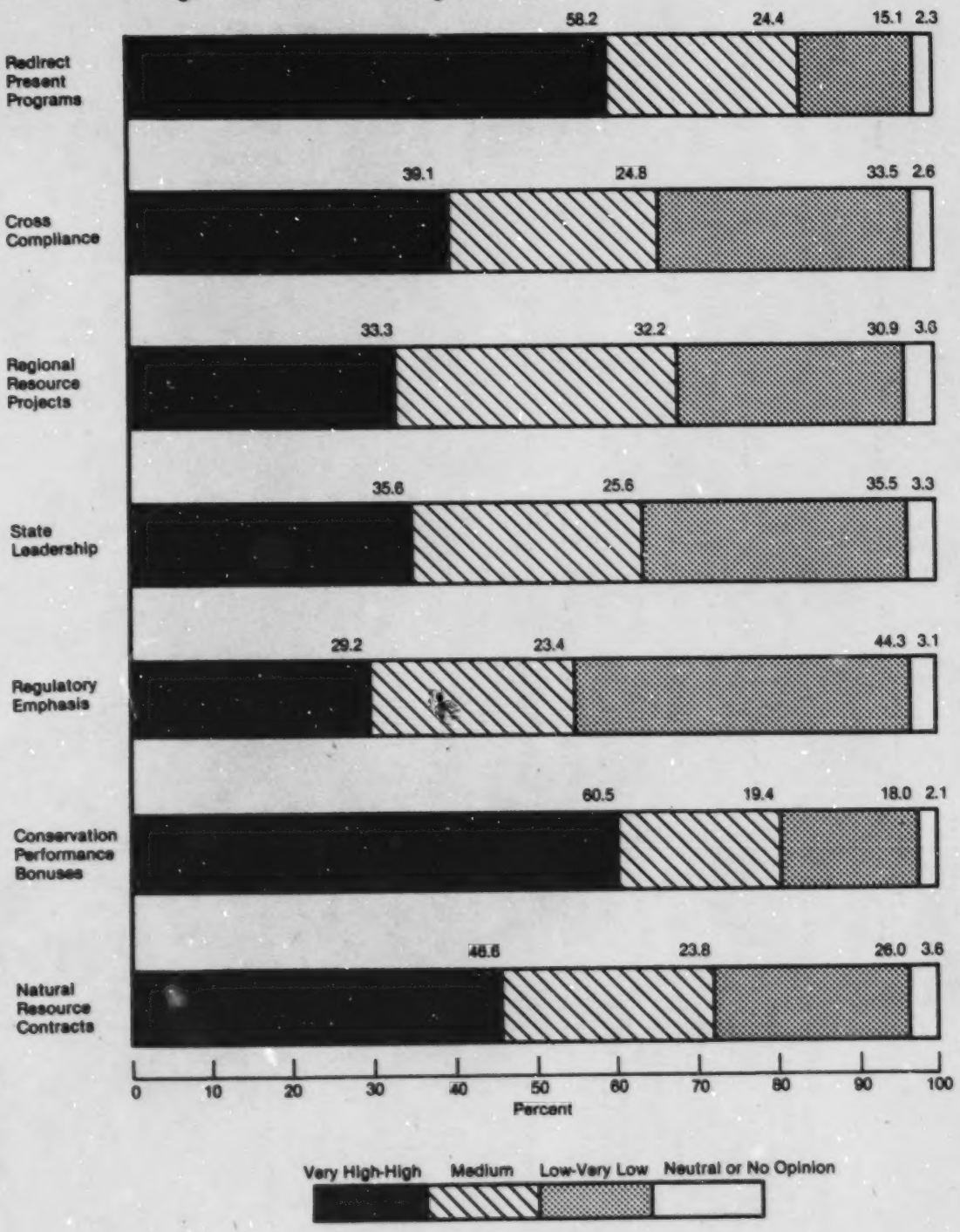


Table 7-11.--Comments supporting or opposing the alternative strategies

Comments	Redirecting present conservation programs		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly support:														
Strongly agree	1,615	2.4	712	1.0	490	0.8	561	0.9	403	0.6	1,080	1.7	520	0.8
Very high acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	6,451	9.6	1,393	2.0	1,704	2.8	2,251	3.6	1,423	2.1	6,846	10.7	4,544	7.3
High acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	5,675	8.4	2,306	3.4	3,412	5.5	4,015	6.3	1,933	2.9	5,391	8.8	4,541	7.3
Very high acceptability to the general public	3,830	5.7	2,328	3.4	1,491	2.4	1,551	2.4	1,221	1.8	2,564	4.0	1,515	2.4
High acceptability to the general public	5,294	7.8	4,096	5.9	3,877	6.3	3,752	5.9	2,885	4.3	4,036	6.3	2,774	4.5
Very high effectiveness in use of tax dollars	4,531	6.7	2,846	4.1	1,886	3.1	1,871	2.9	1,770	2.6	4,210	6.6	2,913	4.7
High effectiveness in use of tax dollars	4,523	6.7	4,249	6.2	3,927	6.4	3,180	5.0	2,785	4.2	5,037	7.9	3,710	5.9
Subtotal strongly supporting	31,919	47.3	17,930	26.0	16,787	27.3	17,181	27.0	12,420	18.5	29,364	46.0	20,517	32.9
Support:														
Agree	7,446	11.0	3,259	4.7	2,629	4.3	2,622	4.1	1,979	2.9	4,698	7.3	2,577	4.1
Medium acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	4,264	6.3	3,946	5.7	5,134	8.3	4,129	6.5	2,796	4.2	2,817	4.4	3,584	5.7
Medium acceptability to the general public	5,281	7.8	4,902	7.1	5,556	9.0	4,911	7.7	4,344	6.4	5,481	8.6	4,817	7.7
Medium effectiveness in use of tax dollars	4,754	7.1	3,545	5.2	4,655	7.6	3,838	5.7	3,353	5.0	3,750	5.9	3,908	6.3
Subtotal supporting	21,745	32.2	15,652	22.7	17,974	29.2	15,500	24.3	12,472	18.5	16,746	26.2	14,886	23.8
Total strongly supporting and supporting	53,664	79.5	33,582	48.7	34,761	56.5	32,681	51.3	24,892	37.0	46,110	72.2	35,403	56.7

Table 7-11.--Comments supporting or opposing the alternative strategies--Continued

Comments	Redirecting present conservation programs		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Oppose:														
Disagree or object	1,185	1.7	4,970	7.2	2,779	4.5	3,528	5.5	5,513	8.2	2,279	3.6	2,971	4.7
Not acceptable to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	1,073	1.6	4,384	6.3	2,159	3.5	2,817	4.4	5,812	8.6	1,104	1.7	1,944	3.1
Not acceptable to the general public	1,059	1.6	2,541	3.7	1,726	2.8	2,270	3.6	3,239	4.8	1,393	2.2	2,158	3.5
Ineffective use of tax dollars	1,191	1.8	2,879	4.2	1,951	3.2	2,797	4.4	3,973	5.9	1,337	2.1	2,447	3.9
Generally against	1,085	1.6	4,220	6.1	2,320	3.8	3,053	4.8	5,122	7.6	1,394	2.2	2,617	4.2
Subtotal opposed	5,593	8.3	18,994	27.5	10,935	17.8	14,465	22.7	23,659	35.1	7,507	11.8	12,137	19.4
Strongly oppose:														
Strongly disagree	326	0.5	1,754	2.5	689	1.1	991	1.6	1,867	2.8	539	0.8	849	1.4
Very low acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	842	1.2	3,215	4.7	1,951	3.2	2,317	3.6	3,250	4.8	753	1.2	1,698	2.7
Low acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	1,237	1.8	3,631	5.3	3,826	6.2	2,786	4.4	3,154	4.7	1,590	2.5	2,052	3.3
Very low acceptability to the general public	930	1.4	1,472	2.1	1,447	2.3	2,062	3.2	2,476	3.7	1,376	2.2	2,333	3.7
Low acceptability to the general public	1,727	2.6	2,367	3.4	3,166	5.1	2,737	4.3	2,861	4.2	2,694	4.2	3,617	5.8
Very low effectiveness in use of tax dollars	1,202	1.8	1,701	2.5	1,829	3.0	2,602	4.1	2,441	3.6	1,084	1.7	1,769	2.8
Low effectiveness in use of tax dollars	1,943	2.9	2,236	3.3	2,941	4.8	3,082	4.8	2,735	4.1	2,187	3.4	2,622	4.2
Subtotal strongly opposing	8,207	12.2	16,376	23.8	15,849	25.7	16,577	26.0	18,784	27.9	10,225	16.0	14,940	23.9
Total opposing and strongly opposing	13,800	20.5	35,370	51.3	26,784	43.5	31,042	48.7	42,443	63.0	17,730	27.8	27,077	43.3
Grand total	67,464	100.0	68,952	100.0	61,545	100.0	63,723	100.0	67,335	100.0	63,842	100.0	62,480	100.0

Table 7-12.--Comments made by farmers and ranchers supporting or opposing the alternative strategies

Comments	Redirecting present conservation programs		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly support:														
Strongly agree	245	1.8	85	0.6	61	0.5	76	0.6	54	0.4	145	1.2	77	0.6
Very high acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	1,347	9.8	302	2.1	376	3.1	482	3.8	338	2.5	1,359	10.7	915	7.3
High acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	985	7.1	417	2.9	595	4.8	762	6.0	374	2.7	1,032	8.2	847	6.8
Very high acceptability to the general public	763	5.5	373	2.6	247	2.0	289	2.3	228	1.6	457	3.6	306	2.5
High acceptability to the general public	860	6.2	638	4.4	631	5.1	658	5.2	474	3.4	694	5.5	434	3.5
Very high effectiveness in use of tax dollars	931	6.7	388	2.6	340	2.8	349	2.7	325	2.3	826	6.5	586	4.7
High effectiveness in use of tax dollars	834	6.0	620	4.2	597	4.8	602	4.7	425	3.1	939	7.4	672	5.4
Subtotal strongly supporting	5,965	43.1	2,823	19.4	2,847	23.1	3,218	25.3	2,218	16.0	5,452	43.1	3,837	30.8
Support:														
Agree	1,700	12.3	350	2.4	354	2.9	345	2.7	216	1.5	751	5.9	402	3.2
Medium acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	878	6.3	701	4.8	961	7.8	780	6.2	554	4.0	590	4.7	670	5.4
Medium acceptability to the general public	1,023	7.4	842	5.8	1,015	8.2	922	7.3	798	5.8	1,017	8.0	847	6.8
Medium effectiveness in use of tax dollars	852	6.2	637	4.4	846	6.9	753	5.9	589	4.3	720	5.7	731	5.9
Subtotal supporting	4,453	32.3	2,530	17.4	3,176	25.8	2,800	22.1	2,157	15.6	3,078	24.3	2,650	21.3
Total strongly supporting and supporting	10,418	75.3	5,353	36.8	6,023	48.9	6,018	47.4	4,375	31.6	8,530	67.4	6,487	52.1

Table 7-12.--Comments made by farmers and ranchers supporting or opposing the alternative strategies--Continued

Comments	Redirecting present conservation programs		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Oppose:														
Disagree or object	221	1.6	1,154	8.0	545	4.4	663	5.2	1,322	9.5	449	3.5	544	4.4
Not acceptable to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	322	2.4	1,283	8.8	640	5.2	764	6.0	1,382	9.9	328	2.6	550	4.4
Not acceptable to the general public	303	2.2	791	5.5	551	4.5	653	5.1	911	6.6	403	3.2	625	5.0
Ineffective use of tax dollars	348	2.5	891	6.1	608	4.9	756	6.0	1,052	7.6	395	3.1	641	5.1
Generally opposed	321	2.3	1,643	11.3	686	5.6	810	6.4	1,441	10.4	405	3.2	670	5.4
Subtotal opposed	1,515	11.0	5,762	39.7	3,030	24.6	3,646	28.7	6,108	44.0	1,980	15.6	3,030	24.3
Strongly oppose:														
Strongly disagree	66	0.5	443	3.0	150	1.2	196	1.5	419	3.0	110	0.9	175	1.4
Very low acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	239	1.7	604	4.1	461	3.8	441	3.5	583	4.2	206	1.6	373	3.0
Low acceptability to farmers, ranchers, and other land users	261	1.9	578	4.0	656	5.3	503	4.0	497	3.6	296	2.3	378	3.1
Very low acceptability to the general public	254	1.8	358	2.5	328	2.7	374	2.9	441	3.2	348	2.8	476	3.8
Low acceptability to the general public	381	2.7	492	3.4	624	5.1	509	4.0	455	3.3	531	4.2	689	5.5
Very low effectiveness in use of tax dollars	285	2.1	434	3.0	442	3.6	448	3.5	504	3.6	260	2.1	379	3.1
Low effectiveness in use of tax dollars	412	3.0	505	3.5	593	4.8	566	4.5	485	3.5	397	3.1	463	3.7
Subtotal strongly opposing	1,898	13.7	3,414	23.5	3,254	26.5	3,037	23.9	3,384	24.4	2,148	17.0	2,933	23.6
Total opposing and strongly opposing	3,413	24.7	9,176	63.2	6,284	51.1	6,683	52.6	9,492	68.4	4,128	32.6	5,963	47.9
Grand total	13,831	100.0	14,529	100.0	12,307	100.0	12,701	100.0	13,867	100.0	12,658	100.0	12,450	100.0

Table 7-13.--Comments predicting the effectiveness of the alternative strategies

Comments	Redirecting present conservation programs		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Medium to very high effectiveness:														
Very high effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	4,200	22.8	2,538	14.2	1,850	10.6	1,797	10.1	2,036	11.7	4,886	27.3	3,489	19.9
High effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	5,137	27.8	4,274	23.8	4,218	24.3	3,396	19.2	3,175	18.3	5,493	30.6	4,307	24.5
Medium effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	4,997	27.1	4,015	22.4	5,015	28.8	4,306	24.3	3,605	20.7	4,157	23.2	4,101	23.3
Subtotal	14,334	77.7	10,827	60.4	11,083	63.7	9,499	53.6	8,816	50.7	14,536	81.1	11,897	67.7
Low effectiveness to ineffective:														
Low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	2,116	11.4	2,480	13.8	3,039	17.5	3,154	17.8	2,690	15.5	1,556	8.7	2,200	12.5
Very low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	1,014	5.5	1,740	9.7	1,663	9.6	2,303	14.1	2,419	13.9	784	4.4	1,403	8.0
Not effective in getting conservation on the land	993	5.4	2,892	16.1	1,605	9.2	2,563	14.5	3,453	19.9	1,039	5.8	2,075	11.8
Subtotal	4,123	22.3	7,112	39.6	6,307	36.3	8,220	46.4	8,562	49.3	3,379	18.9	5,678	32.3
Total	18,457	100.0	17,939	100.0	17,390	100.0	17,719	100.0	17,378	100.0	17,915	100.0	17,575	100.0

Table 7-14.--Comments made by farmers and ranchers predicting the effectiveness of the alternative strategies

Comments	Redirecting present conservation programs		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Medium to very high effectiveness:														
Very high effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	830	22.5	357	9.9	307	8.7	329	9.3	334	9.7	921	25.7	681	19.4
High effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	883	23.9	624	17.4	668	19.0	660	18.6	507	14.8	1,068	29.8	814	23.2
Medium effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	1,016	27.6	749	20.9	969	27.6	840	23.7	637	18.6	759	21.2	732	20.8
Subtotal	2,729	74.0	1,730	48.2	1,944	55.3	1,829	51.6	1,478	43.1	2,748	76.7	2,227	63.4
Low effectiveness to ineffective:														
Low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	450	12.2	569	15.9	620	17.7	590	16.6	525	15.3	331	9.2	426	12.1
Very low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	243	6.6	432	12.0	396	11.3	450	12.7	462	13.5	185	5.2	323	9.2
Not effective in getting conservation on the land	266	7.2	857	23.9	553	15.7	677	19.1	961	28.1	319	8.9	539	15.3
Subtotal	959	26.0	1,858	51.8	1,569	44.7	1,717	48.4	1,948	56.9	835	23.3	1,288	36.6
Total	3,688	100.0	3,588	100.0	3,513	100.0	3,546	100.0	3,426	100.0	3,583	100.0	3,515	100.0

Table 7-15.--Comments of ratings assigned to the alternative strategies*

Comments	Redirecting present conservation programs		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very high general rating, first priority	6,354	29.4	2,872	15.7	2,166	11.1	2,627	13.9	1,934	11.8	6,288	30.6	4,136	21.5
High general rating, second priority	6,239	28.8	4,293	23.4	4,322	22.2	4,077	21.7	2,868	17.4	6,135	29.9	4,849	25.1
Medium general rating, third priority	5,277	24.4	4,531	24.8	6,262	32.2	4,820	25.6	3,848	23.4	3,995	19.4	4,585	23.8
Low general rating, fourth priority	1,822	8.4	3,235	17.7	3,549	18.2	3,393	18.0	3,386	20.6	1,870	9.1	2,757	14.3
Very low general rating, fifth and sixth priorities	1,439	6.7	2,890	15.8	2,460	12.7	3,289	17.5	3,894	23.7	1,831	8.9	2,254	11.7
Neutral	347	1.6	347	1.9	475	2.5	440	2.3	367	2.2	285	1.4	463	2.4
No opinion	156	0.7	131	0.7	222	1.1	185	1.0	147	0.9	137	0.7	236	1.2
Total ranking	21,654	100.0	18,299	100.0	19,456	100.0	18,831	100.0	16,444	100.0	20,541	100.0	19,280	100.0
COMMENTS IN TABLES 7-11, 7-13, AND 7-15	107,555	93.1	105,190	96.1	98,391	97.5	100,273	96.5	101,159	95.0	102,298	96.6	99,335	96.9
COMMENTS DISCUSSED IN NARRATIVE	7,063	6.9	4,208	3.9	2,563	2.5	3,667	3.5	5,305	5.0	3,624	3.4	3,404	3.1
TOTAL COMMENTS ADDRESSING THE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY	114,618	100.0	109,399	100.0	100,954	100.0	103,940	100.0	106,462	100.0	105,922	100.0	102,739	100.0

*In this table comments showing general ratings assigned by respondents are combined with priorities assigned by respondents.

Table 7-16.--Comments of ratings assigned by farmers and ranchers to the alternative strategies*

Comments	Redirecting present conservation pro[illegible]		Cross compliance		Regional resource project approach		State leadership		Regulatory emphasis		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts	
	Number	[illegible]cent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very high general rating, first priority	1,588	31.6	536	13.6	553	12.9	713	16.9	424	11.9	1,569	33.6	1,081	24.7
High general rating, second priority	1,243	25.2	779	19.8	852	19.8	918	21.8	558	15.7	1,322	28.4	1,074	24.6
Medium general rating, third priority	1,170	23.7	930	23.7	1,260	29.4	1,019	24.2	777	21.8	833	17.9	945	21.6
Low general rating, fourth priority	445	9.0	714	18.2	797	19.6	707	16.8	669	18.8	429	9.2	578	13.2
Very low general rating, fifth and sixth priorities	458	9.3	922	23.4	737	17.2	795	18.9	1,084	30.4	473	10.1	609	13.9
Neutral	32	0.7	24	0.6	46	1.1	36	0.8	25	0.7	17	0.4	49	1.1
No opinion	23	0.5	28	0.7	45	1.0	28	0.7	23	0.7	17	0.4	40	0.9
Total ranking	4,929	100.0	3,933	100.0	4,290	100.0	4,216	100.0	3,560	100.0	4,660	100.0	4,376	100.0
COMMENTS IN TABLES 7-12, 7-14, AND 7-16	22,448	93.0	22,050	95.4	20,110	98.5	20,463	97.7	20,853	95.0	20,901	97.1	20,341	95.1
COMMENTS DISCUSSED IN NARRATIVE	1,701	7.0	1,058	4.6	314	1.5	489	2.3	1,110	5.0	627	2.9	1,047	4.9
TOTAL COMMENTS ADDRESSING THE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY	24,149	100.0	23,108	100.0	20,424	100.0	20,952	100.0	21,963	100.0	21,528	100.0	21,388	100.0

*In this table comments showing general ratings assigned by respondents are combined with priorities assigned by respondents.

Table 7-17.--The alternative strategies ranked by degree of support or opposition

Degree of support or opposition	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh
Strongly support	Redirect present programs	Bonus	Contracts	Cross compliance	State leadership	Regional projects	Regulation
Support	Redirect present programs	Regional projects	Bonus	Cross compliance	State leadership	Contracts	Regulation
Total strongly support and support	Redirect present programs	Bonus	Contracts	Regional projects	Cross compliance	State leadership.	Regulation
Oppose	Regulation	Cross compliance	State leadership	Contracts	Regional projects	Bonus	Redirect present programs
Strongly oppose	Regulation	State leadership	Cross compliance	Regional projects	Contracts	Bonus	Redirect present programs
Total oppose and strongly oppose	Regulation	Cross compliance	State leadership	Contracts	Regional projects	Bonus	Redirect present programs

Source: table 7-11.

Table 7-18.--The alternative strategies ranked by degree of support or opposition among farmers and ranchers

Degree of support or opposition	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh
Strongly support	Redirect present programs	Bonus	Contracts	State leadership	Regional projects	Cross compliance	Regulation
Support	Redirect present programs	Regional projects	Bonus	State leadership	Contracts	Cross compliance	Regulation
Total strongly support and support	Redirect present programs	Bonus	Contracts	Regional projects	State leadership	Cross compliance	Regulation
Oppose	Regulation	Cross compliance	State leadership	Contracts (T)	Regional projects (T)	Bonus	Redirect present programs
Strongly oppose	Cross compliance	Regulation	Regional projects	State leadership	Contracts	Bonus	Redirect present programs
Total oppose and strongly oppose	Regulation	Cross compliance	State leadership	Regional projects	Contracts	Bonus	Redirect present programs

Source: table 7-12.

Table 7-19.--Perceived effectiveness ranking of the alternative strategies

Degree of support or opposition	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh
Medium to very high effectiveness:							
Very high effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Bonus	Redirect present programs	Contracts	Cross compliance	Regulation	Regional projects	State leadership
High effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Bonus	Redirect present programs	Contracts	Cross compliance	Regional projects	State leadership	Regulation
Medium effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Regional projects	Redirect present programs	State leadership	Bonus	Contracts	Cross compliance	Regulation
Low effectiveness to ineffective:							
Low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	State leadership	Regional projects	Regulation	Cross compliance	Contracts	Redirect present programs	Bonus
Very low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	State leadership	Regulation	Cross compliance	Regional projects	Contracts	Redirect present programs	Bonus
Not effective in getting conservation on the land	Regulation	Cross compliance	State leadership	Contracts	Regional projects	Bonus	Redirect present programs

Source: table 7-13.

Table 7-20.--Perceived effectiveness ranking of the alternative strategies among farmers and ranchers

Degree of support or opposition	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh
Medium to very high effectiveness:							
Very high effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Bonus	Redirect present programs	Contracts	Cross compliance	Regulation	State leadership	Regional projects
High effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Bonus	Redirect present programs	Contracts	Regional projects	State leadership	Cross compliance	Regulation
Medium effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Redirect present programs	Regional projects	State leadership	Bonus	Cross compliance	Contracts	Regulation
Low effectiveness to ineffective:							
Low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Regional projects	State leadership	Cross compliance	Regulation	Redirect present programs	Contracts	Bonus
Very low effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	Regulation	State leadership	Cross compliance	Regional projects	Contracts	Redirect present programs	Bonus
Not effective in getting conservation on the land	Regulation	Cross compliance	State leadership	Regional projects	Contracts	Bonus	Redirect present programs

Source: table 7-14.

Table 7-21.--General ratings* for the alternative strategies

Priority rating	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh
Very high general rating, first priority	Redirect present programs	Bonus	Contracts	Cross compliance	State leadership	Regional projects	Regulation
High general rating, second priority	Redirect present programs	Bonus	Contracts	Regional projects	Cross compliance	State leadership	Regulation
Medium general rating, third priority	Regional projects	Redirect present programs	State leadership	Contracts	Cross compliance	Bonus	Regulation
Low general rating, fourth priority	Regional projects	State leadership	Regulation	Cross compliance	Contracts	Bonus	Redirect present programs
Very low general rating, fifth and sixth priority	Regulation	State leadership	Cross compliance	Regional projects	Contracts	Bonus	Redirect present programs

*In this table comments showing general ratings assigned by respondents are combined with priorities assigned by respondents.
Source: table 7-15.

Table 7-22.--General ratings* made by farmers and ranchers for the alternative strategies

Priority rating	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh
Very high general rating, first priority	Redirect present programs	Bonus	Contracts	State leadership	Regional projects	Cross compliance	Regulation
High general rating, second priority	Bonus	Redirect present programs	Contracts	State leadership	Regional projects	Cross compliance	Regulation
Medium general rating, third priority	Regional projects	Redirect present programs	State leadership	Contracts	Cross compliance	Bonus	Regulation
Low general rating, fourth priority	Regional projects	Cross compliance	State leadership	Regulation	Contracts	Redirect present programs	Bonus
Very low general rating, fifth and sixth priority	Regulation	Cross compliance	State leadership	Regional projects	Contracts	Bonus	Redirect present programs

*In this table comments showing general ratings assigned by respondents are combined with priorities assigned by respondents.
Source: table 7-16.

Table 7-23.--Redirecting Present Conservation Programs, Northeast region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	956	39.0	976	39.8	263	10.7	256	10.4	2,451	100.0
Local government----	911	53.3	491	28.7	94	5.5	213	12.5	1,709	100.0
Federal government--	396	54.6	223	30.8	24	3.3	82	11.3	725	100.0
Environmental groups----------	92	47.4	50	25.8	17	8.8	35	18.0	194	100.0
Farm organizations--	113	54.8	53	25.7	16	7.8	24	11.7	206	100.0
All other----------	104	43.9	90	38.0	17	7.2	26	10.9	237	100.0
Total----------	2,572	46.6	1,883	34.1	431	7.8	636	11.5	5,522	100.0

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Table 7-24.--Redirecting Present Conservation Programs, Midwest region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	4,951	40.8	4,478	36.9	1,101	9.0	1,615	13.3	12,145	100.0
Local government----	4,803	52.0	2,590	28.1	488	5.3	1,349	14.6	9,230	100.0
Federal government--	2,046	57.0	1,025	28.6	111	3.1	407	11.3	3,589	100.0
Environmental groups----------	258	54.5	125	26.4	31	6.6	59	12.5	473	100.0
Farm organizations--	187	42.4	144	32.7	31	7.0	79	17.9	441	100.0
All other----------	367	50.5	217	29.9	29	4.0	113	15.6	726	100.0
Total----------	12,612	47.4	8,579	32.3	1,791	6.7	3,622	13.6	26,604	100.0

Table 7-25.--Redirecting Present Conservation Programs, South region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	5,151	39.1	5,573	42.3	1,228	9.3	1,221	9.3	13,173	100.0
Local government----	4,523	55.4	1,986	24.3	758	9.3	894	11.0	8,161	100.0
Federal government--	2,289	57.8	1,074	27.2	185	4.7	409	10.3	3,957	100.0
Environmental groups----------	202	51.7	104	26.6	22	5.6	63	16.1	391	100.0
Farm organizations--	306	64.4	91	19.2	23	4.8	55	11.6	475	100.0
All other----------	453	46.1	330	33.5	82	8.3	119	12.1	984	100.0
Total----------	12,924	47.6	9,158	33.7	2,298	8.5	2,761	10.2	27,141	100.0

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Table 7-26.--Redirecting Present Conservation Programs, West region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	1,173	38.9	951	31.5	450	14.9	442	14.7	3,016	100.0
Local government----	1,532	48.3	639	20.1	480	15.1	523	16.5	3,174	100.0
Federal government--	839	59.5	357	25.3	158	11.2	56	4.0	1,410	100.0
Environmental groups----------	42	37.9	32	28.8	26	23.4	11	9.9	111	100.0
Farm organizations--	46	39.0	34	28.8	23	19.5	15	12.7	118	100.0
All other----------	143	52.6	80	29.4	31	11.4	18	6.6	272	100.0
Total----------	3,775	46.6	2,093	25.8	1,168	14.4	1,065	13.2	8,101	100.0

Table 7-27.--Cross Compliance, Northeast region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	654	26.1	597	23.8	704	28.1	551	22.0	2,506	100.0
Local government----	606	36.5	438	26.4	231	13.9	386	23.2	1,661	100.0
Federal government--	279	38.5	188	26.0	76	10.5	181	25.0	724	100.0
Environmental groups----------	75	36.6	54	26.3	28	13.7	48	23.4	205	100.0
Farm organizations--	76	36.3	57	27.3	28	13.4	48	23.0	209	100.0
All other----------	78	33.8	54	23.4	36	15.5	63	27.3	231	100.0
Total----------	1,768	31.9	1,388	25.1	1,103	19.9	1,277	23.1	5,536	100.0

Table 7-28.--Cross Compliance, Midwest region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	2,961	22.3	3,410	25.7	3,956	29.8	2,936	22.2	13,263	100.0
Local government----	3,083	32.6	2,235	23.9	1,740	18.6	2,325	24.9	9,343	100.0
Federal government--	1,252	34.1	995	27.1	414	11.2	1,013	27.6	3,674	100.0
Environmental group----------	236	51.6	115	25.2	26	5.7	80	17.5	457	100.0
Farm organizations--	126	28.7	108	24.6	86	19.6	119	27.1	439	100.0
All other----------	286	37.6	225	29.6	54	7.1	195	25.7	760	100.0
Total----------	7,904	28.3	7,088	25.4	6,276	22.4	6,668	23.9	27,936	100.0

Table 7-29.--Cross Compliance, South region:
summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	2,339	18.2	2,377	18.5	5,316	41.4	2,810	21.9	12,842	100.0
Local government----	2,078	25.7	1,589	19.6	2,504	30.9	1,927	23.8	8,098	100.0
Federal government--	1,218	30.1	981	24.3	748	18.5	1,094	27.1	4,041	100.0
Environmental groups----------	135	33.1	95	23.3	87	21.3	91	22.3	408	100.0
Farm organizations--	129	24.2	107	20.0	173	32.4	125	23.4	534	100.0
All other----------	287	28.1	269	26.3	227	22.2	239	23.4	1,022	100.0
Total----------	6,186	23.0	5,418	20.1	9,055	33.6	6,286	23.3	26,945	100.0

Table 7-30.--Cross Compliance, West region:
summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	564	17.2	770	23.5	1,171	35.8	769	23.5	3,274	100.0
Local government----	823	25.9	492	15.5	1,053	33.2	805	25.4	3,173	100.0
Federal government--	514	35.4	341	23.5	198	13.6	400	27.5	1,453	100.0
Environmental groups----------	36	32.7	33	30.0	13	11.8	28	25.5	110	100.0
Farm organizations--	25	18.5	25	18.5	54	40.0	31	23.0	135	100.0
All other----------	97	33.6	65	22.5	39	13.5	88	30.4	289	100.0
Total----------	2,059	24.4	1,726	20.5	2,528	30.0	2,121	25.1	8,434	100.0

Table 7-31.--Regional Resource Project Approach, Northeast region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	595	28.8	605	29.3	427	20.7	436	21.2	2,063	100.0
Local government----	551	34.3	520	32.4	170	10.6	365	22.7	1,606	100.0
Federal government--	254	37.1	213	31.1	38	5.6	179	26.2	684	100.0
Environmental groups----------	74	37.7	76	38.8	17	8.7	29	14.8	196	100.0
Farm organizations--	61	31.5	73	37.6	15	7.7	45	23.2	194	100.0
All other----------	56	26.9	81	39.0	19	9.1	52	25.0	208	100.0
Total----------	1,591	32.1	1,568	31.7	686	13.9	1,106	22.3	4,951	100.0

Table 7-32.--Regional Resource Project Approach, Midwest region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	2,664	23.7	3,549	31.6	2,271	20.2	2,755	24.5	11,239	100.0
Local government----	2,841	32.3	2,673	30.4	956	10.9	2,323	26.4	8,793	100.0
Federal government--	1,054	30.0	1,228	35.0	214	6.1	1,014	28.9	3,510	100.0
Environmental groups----------	169	38.7	150	34.3	22	5.0	96	22.0	437	100.0
Farm organizations--	122	29.1	120	28.7	76	18.1	101	24.1	419	100.0
All other----------	213	29.3	269	37.0	27	3.7	218	30.0	727	100.0
Total----------	7,063	28.1	7,989	31.8	3,566	14.2	6,507	25.9	25,125	100.0

Table 7-33.--Regional Resource Project Approach, South region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	2,307	21.9	2,732	26.0	3,037	28.8	2,449	23.3	10,525	100.0
Local government----	1,997	26.2	1,917	25.1	1,517	19.9	2,196	28.8	7,627	100.0
Federal government--	1,049	27.1	1,162	30.1	426	11.0	1,227	31.8	3,864	100.0
Environmental groups----------	130	35.0	99	26.7	42	11.3	100	27.0	371	100.0
Farm organizations--	141	28.8	127	25.9	118	24.1	104	21.2	490	100.0
All other----------	268	28.1	349	36.6	128	13.5	208	21.8	953	100.0
Total----------	5,892	24.7	6,386	26.8	5,268	22.1	6,284	26.4	23,830	100.0

Table 7-34.--Regional Resource Project Approach, West region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	657	24.3	739	27.3	649	24.0	662	24.4	2,707	100.0
Local government----	959	32.2	695	23.3	606	20.4	719	24.1	2,979	100.0
Federal government--	448	32.2	424	30.5	95	6.9	423	30.4	1,390	100.0
Environmental groups----------	33	31.1	32	30.2	10	9.4	31	29.3	106	100.0
Farm organizations--	30	26.6	31	27.4	14	12.4	38	33.6	113	100.0
All other----------	93	35.6	86	33.0	20	7.6	62	23.8	261	100.0
Total----------	2,220	29.4	2,007	26.6	1,394	18.4	1,935	25.6	7,556	100.0

Table 7-35.--State Leadership, Northeast region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	587	26.5	516	23.3	589	26.5	525	23.7	2,217	100.0
Local government----	568	35.4	432	26.9	195	12.2	410	25.5	1,605	100.0
Federal government--	168	23.8	214	30.4	77	10.9	246	34.9	705	100.0
Environmental groups----------	70	36.3	54	28.0	18	9.3	51	26.4	193	100.0
Farm organizations--	70	35.5	53	26.9	23	11.7	51	25.9	197	100.0
All other----------	86	39.3	79	36.1	13	5.9	41	18.7	219	100.0
Total----------	1,549	30.2	1,348	26.2	915	17.8	1,324	25.8	5,136	100.0

Table 7-36.--State Leadership, Midwest region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	3,231	27.5	3,261	27.7	2,766	23.5	2,510	21.3	11,768	100.0
Local government----	3,418	38.2	2,330	26.0	1,061	11.8	2,145	24.8	8,954	100.0
Federal government--	1,062	29.7	1,158	32.4	377	10.5	978	27.4	3,575	100.0
Environmental groups----------	188	41.7	128	28.4	42	9.3	93	20.6	451	100.0
Farm organizations--	147	34.2	126	29.3	72	16.7	85	19.8	430	100.0
All other----------	271	37.1	262	35.8	35	4.8	163	22.3	731	100.0
Total----------	8,317	32.1	7,265	28.0	4,353	16.8	5,974	23.1	25,909	100.0

Table 7-37.--State Leadership, South region:
summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	2,030	18.3	2,263	20.3	3,951	35.5	2,880	25.9	11,124	100.0
Local government----	1,836	23.4	1,387	17.6	2,288	29.1	2,350	29.9	7,861	100.0
Federal government--	653	16.2	823	20.4	913	22.6	1,646	40.8	4,035	100.0
Environmental groups----------	119	31.1	89	23.2	66	17.2	109	28.5	383	100.0
Farm organization---	145	28.7	99	19.6	146	28.9	115	22.8	505	100.0
All other----------	272	27.8	258	26.3	216	22.1	233	23.8	979	100.0
Total----------	5,055	20.3	4,919	19.8	7,580	30 4	7,333	29.5	24,887	100.0

Table 7-38.--State Leadership, West region:
summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	663	24.1	800	29.0	684	24.8	609	22.1	2,756	100.0
Local government----	1,046	34.8	642	21.3	655	21.8	667	22.1	3,010	100.0
Federal government--	372	26.0	365	25.5	189	13.2	506	35.3	1,432	100.0
Environmental groups----------	28	24.8	20	17.7	25	22.1	40	35.4	113	100.0
Farm organizations--	29	24.8	31	26.5	15	12.8	42	35.9	117	100.0
All other----------	97	36.1	85	31.6	31	11.5	56	20.8	269	100.0
Total----------	2,235	29.0	1,943	25.2	1,599	20.8	1,921	25.0	7,698	100.0

Table 7-39.--Regulatory Emphasis, Northeast Region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	449	18.3	512	20.9	829	33.8	660	27.0	2,450	100.0
Local government----	414	24.5	338	20.0	399	23.6	538	31.9	1,689	100.0
Federal government--	161	21.9	167	22.7	172	23.4	235	32.0	735	100.0
Environmental groups----------	56	29.0	31	16.1	38	19.7	68	35.2	193	100.0
Farm organizations--	56	26.4	47	22.2	40	18.9	69	32.5	212	100.0
All other----------	50	22.5	61	27.5	36	16.2	75	33.8	222	100.0
Total----------	1,186	21.6	1,156	21.0	1,514	27.5	1,645	29.9	5,501	100.0

Table 7-40.--Regulatory Emphasis, Midwest Region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	2,180	17.4	2,596	20.7	4,394	35.1	3,361	26.8	12,531	100.0
Local government----	2,380	26.9	2,001	22.6	1,862	21.1	2,598	29.4	8,841	100.0
Federal government--	835	23.7	855	24.3	544	15.5	1,282	36.5	3,516	100.0
Environmental groups----------	170	38.8	111	25.3	42	9.6	115	26.3	438	100.0
Farm organizations--	99	22.5	90	20.5	118	26.9	132	30.1	439	100.0
All other----------	173	24.1	177	24.6	104	14.5	265	36.8	719	100.0
Total----------	5,837	22.0	5,830	22.0	7,064	26.7	7,753	29.3	26,484	100.0

Table 7-41.--Regulatory Emphasis, South Region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	1,594	12.9	1,741	14.1	6,086	49.1	2,964	23.9	12,385	100.0
Local government----	1,346	15.9	1,180	14.0	3,843	45.6	2,066	24.5	8,435	100.0
Federal government--	616	14.6	746	17.7	1,484	35.3	1,364	32.4	4,210	100.0
Environmental groups----------	90	20.9	82	19.1	140	32.6	118	27.4	430	100.0
Farm organizations--	93	17.7	79	15.1	205	39.1	147	28.1	524	100.0
All other----------	175	16.9	232	22.4	353	34.2	274	26.5	1,034	100.0
Total----------	3,914	14.5	4,060	15.0	12,111	44.8	6,933	25.7	27,018	100.0

Table 7-42.--Regulatory Emphasis, West Region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	427	14.1	542	18.0	1,206	39.9	847	28.0	3,022	100.0
Local government----	622	19.6	500	15.7	1,183	37.3	871	27.4	3,176	100.0
Federal government--	314	21.2	267	18.0	362	24.5	537	36.3	1,480	100.0
Environmental groups----------	25	21.6	25	21.6	32	27.5	34	29.3	116	100.0
Farm organizations--	25	18.7	20	14.9	53	39.5	36	26.9	134	100.0
All other----------	60	19.6	49	16.0	88	28.8	109	35.6	306	100.0
Total----------	1,473	17.9	1,403	17.0	2,924	35.5	2,434	29.6	8,234	100.0

Table 7-43.--Conservation Performance Bonus, Northeast region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	873	38.5	773	34.1	319	14.1	301	13.3	2,266	100.0
Local government----	848	53.2	364	22.8	116	7.3	267	16.7	1,595	100.0
Federal government--	326	46.7	202	28.9	35	5.1	135	19.3	698	100.0
Environmental groups----------	116	58.3	37	18.6	16	8.0	30	15.1	199	100.0
Farm organizations--	131	66.2	30	15.2	8	4.0	29	14.6	198	100.0
All other----------	101	45.3	75	33.6	15	6.7	32	14.4	223	100.0
Total----------	2,395	46.3	1,481	28.6	509	9.8	794	15.3	5,179	100.0

Table 7-44.--Conservation Performance Bonus, Midwest region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	4,885	40.5	3,710	30.8	1,611	13.4	1,854	15.3	12,060	100.0
Local government----	5,062	56.6	1,956	21.9	585	6.5	1,340	15.0	8,943	100.0
Federal government--	1,936	53.9	932	2.6	153	4.3	569	15.8	3,590	100.0
Environmental groups----------	263	57.3	103	22.4	38	8.3	55	12.0	459	100.0
Farm organizations--	200	47.6	102	24.3	39	9.3	79	18.8	420	100.0
All other----------	383	51.9	213	28.9	35	4.7	107	14.5	738	100.0
Total----------	12,729	48.5	7,016	26.8	2,461	9.4	4,004	15.3	26,210	100.0

Table 7-45.--Conservation Performance Bonus, South region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	4,192	37.9	3,069	27.7	2,213	20.0	1,598	14.4	11,072	100.0
Local government----	3,810	49.8	1,587	20.8	855	11.2	1,393	18.2	7,645	100.0
Federal government--	1,855	47.4	996	25.4	287	7.3	778	19.9	3,916	100.0
Environmental groups----------	203	53.6	85	22.4	12	3.2	79	20.8	379	100.0
Farm organizations--	228	47.0	123	25.4	59	12.2	75	15.4	485	100.0
All other----------	407	41.3	306	31.0	103	10.5	170	17.2	986	100.0
Total----------10,695		43.7	6,166	25.2	3,529	14.4	4,093	16.7	24,483	100.0

Table 7-46.--Conservation Performance Bonus, West region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	1,104	37.5	909	30.8	426	14.4	509	17.3	2,948	100.0
Local government----	1,453	48.3	601	20.0	467	15.5	489	16.2	3,010	100.0
Federal government--	700	49.8	411	29.2	53	3.8	242	17.2	1,406	100.0
Environmental groups----------	60	55.6	21	19.4	10	9.3	17	15.7	108	100.0
Farm organizations--	57	48.3	25	21.2	14	11.9	22	18.6	118	100.0
All other----------	134	47.3	81	28.6	24	8.5	44	15.6	283	100.0
Total----------	3,508	44.6	2,048	26.0	994	12.6	1,323	16.8	7,873	100.0

Table 7-47.--Natural Resource Contracts, Northeast region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	611	29.6	484	23.5	507	24.6	459	22.3	2,061	100.0
Local government----	572	35.9	350	21.9	268	16.8	406	25.4	1,596	100.0
Federal government--	208	29.8	175	25.1	73	10.5	241	34.6	697	100.0
Environmental groups----------	79	40.9	46	23.8	26	13.5	42	21.8	193	100.0
Farm organizations--	86	43.4	52	26.3	19	9.6	41	20.7	198	100.0
All other----------	65	31.0	56	26.7	32	15.2	57	27.1	210	100.0
Total----------	1,621	32.7	1,163	23.5	925	18.7	1,246	25.1	4,955	100.0

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Table 7-48.--Natural Resource Contracts, Midwest region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	3,380	29.8	2,969	26.2	2,302	20.3	2,693	23.7	11,344	100.0
Local government----	3,574	40.2	2,184	24.6	965	10.9	2,156	24.3	8,879	100.0
Federal government--	1,291	36.5	1,041	29.5	265	7.5	933	26.5	3,530	100.0
Environmental groups----------	195	43.1	102	22.6	50	11.1	105	23.2	452	100.0
Farm organizations--	157	36.6	92	21.5	79	18.4	101	23.5	429	100.0
All other----------	274	38.2	224	31.2	48	6.7	171	23.9	717	100.0
Total----------	8,871	35.0	6,612	26.1	3,709	14.6	6,159	24.3	25,351	100.0

Table 7-49.--Natural Resource Contracts, South region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	2,896	26.9	2,391	22.2	3,229	30.0	2,241	20.9	10,757	100.0
Local government----	2,734	34.9	1,472	18.8	1,793	22.9	1,838	23.4	7,837	100.0
Federal government--	1,243	31.1	945	23.7	662	16.6	1,141	28.6	3,991	100.0
Environmental groups----------	158	41.3	89	23.3	53	13.9	82	21.5	382	100.0
Farm organizations--	168	35.8	107	22.8	90	19.2	104	22.2	469	100.0
All other----------	299	31.0	261	27.0	170	17.6	235	24.4	965	100.0
Total----------	7,498	30.7	5,265	21.6	5,997	24.6	5,641	23.1	24,401	100.0

Table 7-50.--Natural Resource Contracts, West region: summary of comments expressing support or opposition

Respondent type	Strongly support		Support		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Individual----------	754	26.8	752	26.8	641	22.8	664	23.6	2,811	100.0
Local government----	1,036	34.8	553	18.6	659	22.2	724	24.4	2,972	100.0
Federal government--	522	37.2	379	27.0	128	9.1	375	26.7	1,404	100.0
Environmental groups----------	53	47.3	25	22.3	13	11.6	21	18.8	112	100.0
Farm organizations--	41	35.0	36	30.8	14	12.0	26	22.2	117	100.0
All other----------	95	35.7	77	29.0	29	10.9	65	24.4	266	100.0
Total----------	2,501	32.6	1,822	23.7	1,484	19.3	1,875	24.4	7,682	100.0

Chapter 8 - Alternatives, Objectives, and Activities

USDA, through the RCA process, identified seven areas of concern for soil, water, and related resources and proposed conservation objectives for each. The Department also proposed strategies that might be used to implement the national soil and water conservation program. These strategies include two organizational refinements--redirecting present programs and expanding state leadership; two incentives--conservation bonuses and natural resource contracts; two disincentives--cross compliance and regulation; and a regionalized approach to problem solving.

Preceding chapters discuss the public's comments on the acceptability of the proposed strategies, their judgments on the importance of soil and water conservation objectives, and their preferred kinds of activities. Most respondents address strategies and objectives individually, expressing support or opposition without commenting on which strategies would be most effective in achieving each of the RCA objectives. Other respondents comment on the acceptability of a strategy or suggest adopting various combinations of strategies. Those comments are analyzed in chapter 7.

Comments saying which strategies and activities might best achieve specific objectives are analyzed in this chapter. Although many comments (168,147) address the relationship between alternatives, objectives, and activities, most of these comments (74 percent) express opinions on the effectiveness of the strategies in achieving conservation goals in general. The remaining comments discuss specific RCA goals in terms of program administration (both funding and which level of government should be responsible for carrying out the programs), choices between the use of incentives and disincentives and between voluntary and mandatory programs, and specific conservation practices and policies that might be used to accomplish the objectives. Less than 1 percent of the comments link specific strategies with specific RCA objectives.

Some respondents comment that they were not given enough information about the programs and proposed strategies to adequately relate the strategies and conservation objectives. Others can see no clear connection between strategies and objectives. These comments and the small number of responses addressing the relationship between strategies and objectives may indicate a need for USDA to clarify how the strategies would achieve the objectives.

Because the total number of responses received during the RCA public review period was large, the responses were coded for computer processing. Comments relating alternatives, objectives, and activities were coded in many different ways, making it difficult to identify all of them. Analysts attempted to retrieve these comments using the topic code-comment code combinations; however, many of them could have been retrieved only by reading the original letters.

Alternative Strategies

The alternative strategies themselves are analyzed in detail in chapter 7. This section analyzes those comments that specify alternatives to meet each of the RCA objectives. Table 8-1 displays the preferences of the respondents in using the alternatives to meet the resource objectives. Table 7-2 (page 7-2) shows comments rating the strategies' effectiveness in getting conservation on the land.

Redirecting present conservation programs is the preferred alternative for meeting most of the resource objectives. Respondents favor linking programs more closely to soil and water conservation objectives, phasing out programs that duplicate services or do not contribute to meeting the objectives, implementing conservation practices more effectively, and offering programs that will pay off for the farmer. Those who support redirection are also concerned about excessive government involvement and prefer the voluntary nature of present programs.

State leadership is ranked as the second most favored alternative in achieving specific conservation objectives. Most comments, however, say that giving the state an expanded role in a program that involves national leadership and local responsibility is preferable to giving leadership of the program to the states. State leadership might fragment the RCA process into 50 different efforts and would not ensure that national priorities in soil and water conservation were addressed, according to some respondents.

Conservation performance bonuses are also seen as highly effective. However, some respondents think that bonuses would be too difficult to administer and would give recipients an unfair advantage over farmers who could not afford to use conservation practices. Generally, however, respondents support the use of incentives to encourage conservation.

Natural resource contracts are viewed as being the most difficult strategy to administer and as involving too much bureaucracy. Respondents are concerned that the Universal Soil Loss Equation would be used to measure soil loss and that it would not serve as an accurate base for payment.

The cross compliance strategy is seen as another form of regulation; it has less support than most other strategies. Respondents say that short term emergency programs should not be tied to long range conservation programs. Some say that cross compliance would put a financial burden on farmers who could not participate in commodity support programs because they could not afford to invest in conservation practices. Other respondents think that this alternative might work for farms producing supported commodities but that it ignores livestock producers.

Regulation is generally the least favored alternative. The major objections are that regulation reduces landowners' rights and limits production choices, and therefore would be unacceptable to farmers and landowners. In addition, regulation is rated least effective in getting conservation on the land. Of those who support a regulatory approach, most are concerned that voluntary programs are ineffective in meeting conservation goals. Although these

Table 8-1.--Preferred strategies to achieve the objectives, by number and percent

Resources and objectives	Redirect present program		Cross compliance		Regional resource projects		State leadership		Regulation		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts		Total	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Soil resource quantity and quality:																
Reduce soil erosion	19	25	11	15	5	7	6	8	10	13	19	25	5	7	75	100
Retain prime farmland	50	20	26	10	39	15	41	16	39	15	32	13	26	10	253	100
Maintain soil quality	17	31	7	13	4	7	4	7	4	7	16	30	2	4	54	100
Improve rangeland	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	100	--	--	--	--	1	100
Other	32	20	21	13	20	13	23	15	16	10	24	15	22	14	158	100
Total	118	22*	65	12	68	13	74	14	70	13	91	17	55	10	541	100
Water quality:																
Reduce toxic pollutants	10	19	5	9	7	13	10	19	17	32	4	8	--	--	53	100
Minimize adverse impact of organic waste	15	33	6	13	5	11	4	9	9	20	6	13	--	--	45	100
Minimize nutrient pollution	12	28	7	16	3	7	6	14	9	21	5	12	1	2	43	100
Reduce salinity	9	21	6	14	9	21	10	23	5	12	4	9	--	--	43	100
Reduce sediment	24	16	20	14	22	15	20	14	20	14	21	14	19	13	146	100
Other	36	15	29	12	37	15	40	16	30	12	34	14	38	16	244	100
Total	106	18*	73	13	83	14	90	16	90	16	74	13	58	10	574	100
Water supply and conservation:																
Increase irrigation efficiency	14	34	6	15	8	20	5	12	2	5	6	15	--	--	41	100
Maximize water supplies	14	28	9	18	5	10	7	14	10	20	4	8	1	2	50	100
Other	14	23	10	17	10	17	10	17	6	10	8	13	2	3	60	100
Total	42	28*	25	17	23	15	22	15	18	12	18	12	3	2	151	100
Fish and wildlife habitat:																
Reduce loss of wetlands	11	22	5	10	5	10	9	18	7	14	6	12	7	14	50	100
Increase instream flows	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-	--	--	1	100	1	100
Improve wildlife habitat	15	32	6	13	4	9	7	15	2	4	8	17	5	11	47	100
Other	28	18	19	12	23	15	25	16	17	11	19	12	23	15	154	100
Total	54	21*	30	12	32	13	41	16	26	10	33	13	36	14	252	100

Table 8-1.--Preferred strategies to achieve the objectives, by number and percent--Continued

Resources and objectives	Redirect present program		Cross compliance		Regional resource projects		State leadership		Regulation		Conservation performance bonus		Natural resource contracts		Total	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Upstream flood damages:																
Reduce flood damages	40	20	26	13	33	17	26	13	23	12	28	14	20	10	196	100
Flood prevention project priority	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	100	--	--	--	--	2	100
Total	40	20*	26	13	33	17	26	13	25	13	28	14	20	10	198	100
Energy conservation and production:																
Reduce energy use	38	21	21	12	22	12	30	17	18	10	28	16	22	12	179	100
Increase energy production	39	22	21	12	22	12	29	16	16	9	29	16	21	12	177	100
Other	1	100	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	100
Total	78	22*	42	12	44	12	59	17	34	10	57	16	43	12	357	100
Related resources:																
Use organic waste	9	13	6	10	6	10	9	15	25	40	5	8	2	3	62	100
Urban area conservation	9	21	5	12	6	14	7	16	9	21	5	12	2	5	43	100
Other	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	100	--	--	--	--	1	100
Total	18	17	11	10	12	11	16	15	35	33*	10	9	4	4	106	100
Other resource objectives	7	28*	5	20	2	8	2	8	1	4	7	28*	1	4	25	100
TOTAL	463	21*	277	13	297	13	330	15	299	14	318	14	220	10	2,204	100

* Preferred strategy to achieve the objective.

respondents are few in number, they suggest many different ways in which farmers and landowners should be regulated.

Regional resource projects are not strongly supported. Respondents think that RCA should address the conservation problems of all regions, not just the most severe problems in some regions. They think that this strategy would favor areas of greater agricultural importance. Comments supporting a regional approach emphasize the benefits in resource management if regional and area projects were combined.

Soil Resource Objectives

A total of 4,608 comments address strategies and activities for achieving soil resource objectives. Comments addressing specific combinations of strategies and objectives favor redirecting present programs over all other strategies to achieve the soil resource objectives. The most frequent request concerning redirection is for more and better technical and financial assistance for conservation application. Such requests make up more than 17 percent of these comments on soil resources. Of the comments related to funding, 38 percent call for more cost sharing funds for soil resource problems. In particular, respondents want funding increased for drainage, lime, long term vegetative cover, conservation tillage, erosion control, fertilizers, soil surveys, cover crops, and clearing to improve pasture and cropland.

Most comments addressing the delivery system for a soil resources program say that primary responsibility for implementing the program should be given to the local level (individuals, soil conservation districts, and ASC county committees) and that technical and financial assistance should be provided by the federal government. Comments on program structure at the federal level oppose the creation of a "super agency" and suggest that USDA cooperate more closely with other Departments, such as HUD, DOT, and USDI. For example, HUD and DOT programs should not encourage housing and highway development on prime farmland. In addition, agencies should be organized along functional lines to eliminate interprogram and intraprogram duplication.

The largest group of comments (1,131) addresses regulation. Most of these advocate keeping soil programs voluntary and encouraging soil conservation through economic incentives. Comments on retaining prime and unique farmland, however, support more regulation of land use through local zoning and land use controls.

Water Quality Objectives

A total of 1,654 comments address strategies and activities that relate to water quality objectives. The comments addressing specific combinations of strategies and objectives generally favor redirecting present programs to achieve the water quality objectives. Three percent of the comments addressing water quality suggest new programs for streambank protection, cleaning up lakes, and reducing nonpoint source pollution. Five percent say that cost share funding should be increased. Another 5 percent say that the worst water quality problems should be solved first.

Of the comments on water quality, 15 percent suggest combining agencies to administer the programs. More than half of these favor some consolidation of the technical, financial, and educational programs that are duplicated among agencies. Respondents also want USDA to cooperate more closely with USDI and EPA.

Another 15 percent of the comments address the level of government that should be responsible for meeting the objectives. Of these comments, 63 percent say that state government should be involved in improving water quality.

The largest group of comments (315) addresses regulation. Of these, 54 percent call for more regulations and stronger and more consistent enforcement of existing laws, even though the regulatory emphasis is not a highly preferred alternative strategy.

Water Supply and Conservation Objectives

A total of 1,036 comments address strategies and activities that relate to water supply and water conservation objectives. Comments addressing specific combinations of strategies and objectives favor redirecting present programs to achieve the objectives. Ten percent of the comments on water supply say that additional federal funding is needed to increase and conserve supplies. Only 18 comments address the organizational structure of water supply programs at the federal level, and four of these say that programs should be administered through existing agencies.

Of the comments relating to program redirection, 25 percent encourage ground water recharge; 21 percent want programs redirected to build more dams, lakes, and levees; 15 percent suggest improving water delivery and importing water in water-short regions from regions of oversupply; and 10 percent suggest improving irrigation efficiency. Other comments suggest expanding the water supply by dredging old ponds, installing water recycling plants, installing pressure reducing valves in homes and industry, desalinization, and monitoring water use.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Objectives

A total of 1,680 comments address strategies and activities that relate to fish and wildlife habitat objectives. Comments addressing specific combinations of strategies and objectives favor redirecting present programs to achieve the resource objectives.

Of the comments relating to redirection, 26 percent say that conservation practices are the best approach to improving fish and wildlife habitat; 20 percent say that past practices and policies have caused current problems in fish and wildlife habitat and suggest that they be revised to solve the problems. Of the comments on funding, 37 percent call for increasing federal funds. Of the comments on program responsibility, 44 percent say that the state should be involved in program implementation.

Upstream Flood Damage Objectives

A total of 1,605 comments address strategies and activities that relate to flood damage objectives. Comments addressing specific combinations of strategies and objectives favor redirecting present programs to achieve the objectives. Of the comments relating to redirection, 50 percent say that programs should be redirected to build more dams, lakes, and levees. Ten percent say that building, cropping, and energy development should be prohibited on flood plains.

Of the comments on funding, 38 percent call for increasing federal funds to reduce flood damages; 52 percent say that federal funding on flood plains should be limited to grasslands. Some respondents think that responsibility should rest with local governments.

Energy Conservation and Production Objectives

Only 911 comments address strategies and activities that relate to energy production and conservation objectives. Comments addressing specific combinations of strategies and objectives favor redirecting present programs to achieve the energy objectives. Of the comments relating to redirection, 32 percent encourage use of no-till farming methods to reduce energy use and suggest that no-till or conservation tillage be required on lands with slopes over 8 percent. Sixteen percent say that crop residues should not be used for energy production because residues left on the land improve soil quality.

Of the comments on energy conservation funding, 68 percent call for increasing federal funds to meet the objectives. Of the comments on federal organization for program development, 36 percent say that energy production and conservation should be handled by DOE.

Related Resource Objectives

Only 569 comments address strategies and activities for related resource objectives. Comments addressing specific combinations of strategies and objectives favor a regulatory approach to solving the resource problems. They say that local land use controls such as planning and zoning are necessary in preventing urbanization of farmland. Of the comments on related resource funding, 57 percent call for increasing federal funds to meet the objectives.

Conservation Activities

About 12,000 comments (170 different comment codes) address specific conservation activities in relation to achieving the resource objectives. Most of these comments deal with program funding and conservation practices. Overall, 3,770 respondents say that the proposed RCA activities to meet the objectives are adequate, while 2,499 respondents say that the activities will not meet the objectives. Comments on specific conservation activities are more fully discussed in chapter 6.

Summary

Only 2,204 comments, a tiny fraction of the 1.5 million comments received, link specific strategies with specific RCA objectives. It is hard to draw any conclusion from such a small group.

The fact that so few respondents comment on the relationship between strategies and objectives indicates, however, that USDA needs to more clearly explain how a given strategy works in reaching an objective. For instance, to achieve the water quality objectives, setting water quality standards and meeting them through regulation may be the only suitable approach. If respondents cannot then support regulation, they need to know and accept that the water quality objectives cannot satisfactorily be met. These relationships need to be clearly spelled out in the next draft of the RCA report.

Of the 166,000 comments dealing with general relationships among the alternatives, objectives, and activities, more favor redirecting existing programs to meet the conservation objectives than any other strategy. Most comments support increasing funding, phasing out programs that duplicate services, and linking programs more closely to soil and water conservation objectives. They call for programs that are flexible, voluntary, and provide incentives for encouraging conservation. Many say that programs must offer economic benefit to farmers before farmers will accept them.

Chapter 9 - USDA and Its Agencies

Chapter 9 discusses the comments that relate to USDA and its agencies that have programs and activities for conserving soil, water, and related resources. Similar comments are grouped, and differences between regions and respondent types are noted. Comments relating to a single agency are presented independently.

RCA program development should be based on an understanding of what the public perceives is needed and desirable as well as on resource appraisal. A program designed around resource needs, tempered by concerns expressed through public participation, and implemented by agencies that are sensitive to the wishes of their constituencies will have a high degree of acceptance and effectiveness. This chapter will provide help in designing such a program.

The Scope of the Response

Nationwide, 18,741 comments deal with USDA and its agencies. Of these comments, 45 percent come from the South, 28 percent from the Midwest, 18 percent from the Northeast, and 9 percent from the West. Responses are in the following forms:

Form of response	Number of responses	Percentage of comments
Personal letter	4,485	38
Structured response form	3,588	30
Nonstructured response form	2,054	17
Petition	1,590	14
Other	139	1
Total	11,856	100

Most of the respondents, 78 percent, are individuals. Respondents representing state and local governments make up 12 percent of the total; farm organizations, 1 percent; and environmental groups, 1 percent. Table 9-1 shows the distribution of the total response by type of respondent and RCA region. Table 9-2 shows the regional distribution of the response on each agency. The comments are directed to the various agencies as follows:

Agency	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS)	6,514	35
Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service (ESCS)	42	*
Farmers Home Administration (FmHA)	375	2
Forest Service (FS)	329	2
Science and Education Administration (SEA)	253	1
Soil Conservation Service (SCS)	5,515	29
Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB)	17	*
Secretary of Agriculture	136	1
Other/all USDA agencies	5,560	30
Total	18,741	100

*Less than 0.5 percent.

Table 9-1.--Comments on USDA agencies, by respondent type and RCA region

Respondent type	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Unknown	Total
Academic	5	0	11	0	0	16
Agribusiness	1	11	28	2	0	42
Business/industry	11	0	30	0	0	41
Civic/social	0	2	58	1	0	61
Commodity	20	9	41	46	0	116
Environmental	40	32	42	17	0	131
Farm organization	54	39	65	46	0	204
Federal government	232	281	459	151	0	1,123
Individual	2,395	4,220	6,774	1,139	17	14,545
Industry/trade group	7	3	5	0	0	15
Labor organization	0	0	0	0	0	--
Local government	385	511	748	304	3	1,951
Minority organization	0	0	80	0	0	80
State government	147	63	106	39	0	355
Youth organization	1	1	9	0	0	11
Other groups	2	6	7	1	0	16
Other	0	17	0	17	0	34
Total	3,330	5,195	8,463	1,763	20	18,741

Table 9-2.--Comments on USDA agencies, percentage distribution by RCA region

Agency	RCA region				Total
	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	
ASCS	17	34	43	6	100
ESCS	26	19	50	5	100
FmHA	32	20	41	7	100
FS	55	12	24	9	100
SEA	38	24	34	4	100
SCS	19	24	44	13	100
CEQ/OMB	29	53	6	12	100
Secretary of Agriculture	27	18	13	42	100
Other/All USDA agencies	13	25	52	10	100
All comments on agencies	18	28	45	9	100
Nonmetropolitan population	24	31	31	14	100

Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS)

Nationwide, 6,514 comments relate directly to ASCS. Most deal with organization, 26 percent; acceptability, 15 percent; funding, 15 percent; effectiveness, 5 percent; or staffing, 3 percent. The other 36 percent are listed in the appendix.

Organization.--Of 1,637 comments, 97 percent say that ASCS's present delivery system is satisfactory, about 2 percent advocate consolidating ASCS functions with those of other USDA agencies, and 1 percent advocate fine tuning existing ASCS programs. The Northeast and Midwest respondents, while favoring the present organizational arrangement, had the highest percentage favoring change--12 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

Acceptability.--Of 923 comments regarding acceptability of ASCS programs, 97 percent indicate that ASCS programs have medium to high acceptability to landusers and the general public. Only 3 percent indicate low to very low acceptability.

Funding.--Of 915 comments, nearly all say that increased funding would help achieve conservation goals.

Effectiveness.--Of 282 comments, 90 percent say that ASCS programs have medium to high effectiveness in achieving conservation goals and 10 percent say that ASCS is ineffective or is not very effective.

Staffing.--Of 178 comments, 84 percent say that an increase in staffing assistance is needed and 16 percent say that staffing assistance should be decreased or that the agency's employees are inept.

Following are a few excerpts from responses about ASCS:

> "Believe the present ASC Committee system is the most effective method of administering Federal soil and water conservation programs. If funded properly, ACP with technical assistance from SCS could accomplish RCA."
>
> "County committees should have more flexibility in developing local ACP program in consultation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts."
>
> "ASCS and SCS are good programs but they are always run with insufficient funds."
>
> "I feel the farm programs should be left as they are, but there should be more money for programs."
>
> "The place to start in my opinion is with the time proven, locally elected, county committees."
>
> "The ASCS with offices in nearly every county in this nation is presently organized and trained to administer conservation programs."

Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service (ESCS)

Nationwide, only 42 comments relate to ESCS. Fourteen deal with organization, eight with funding, and five with acceptance. The other 15 are listed in the appendix. The content and number of comments about ESCS probably indicate that the respondents are unfamiliar with ESCS programs and activities or its role in RCA.

Organization.--Of 14 comments, eight say that no change is needed; four advocate improving efficiency, coordination, and communication; and one advocates consolidating ESCS functions with those of other agencies.

Funding.--Of eight comments, six say maintain the present level and two say increase funding and pay.

Acceptability.--Of five comments, four agree with the present function of ESCS and one says that ESCS is ready to assist given proper authority, personnel, and funding.

Farmers Home Administration (FmHA)

Nationwide, 375 comments relate to FmHA. Most deal with funding, 22 per[illegible] acceptability, 14 percent; organization, 9 percent; effectiveness, 7 pe[illegible] or staffing, 1 percent. The other 47 percent are listed in the appendi[illegible]

Funding.--Of 82 comments, 58 say that the present level is adequate and should be maintained and 24 want funding and pay increased.

Acceptability.--Of 52 comments, 38 indicate FmHA programs have medium to h[illegible] acceptability. Fourteen say that FmHA programs are unacceptable or disagre[illegible] with them.

Organization.--Of 32 comments, 19 say that no change is needed, seven say that some agencies and programs could be combined, and six say that better coordination between agencies is desirable.

Effectiveness.--Of 25 comments, 19 say that FmHA has medium to high effectiveness in achieving conservation goals and six say that the agency is not very effective.

Staffing.--Of 5 comments, three say that more technical assistance is needed and two say maintain present staffing.

Respondents have a variety of comments about FmHA programs, such as the following:

> "FmHA was introduced to help small farmers, not to make loans of $1 million and over."
>
> "FmHA has no money for farm mortgages."
>
> "They (agencies) are able to do the needed job in the future with assistance of the SCS and FmHA if they get the money they need."

"I would like to see SCS, ASCS and FmHA continue to operate just like they are doing now."

"I would suggest that we take existing agencies and their programs and extend them to cover those areas not already covered."

Forest Service (FS)

Nationally, 329 comments relate directly to the Forest Service. Most concern staffing, 21 percent; effectiveness, 12 percent; organization, 10 percent; funding, 10 percent; or acceptability, 5 percent. The other 42 percent are listed in the appendix.

Staffing.--Of 70 comments, 57 say that the present level is adequate and should be maintained and 13 say that additional technical assistance is needed.

Effectiveness.--Of 42 comments, 39 say that the Forest Service has a medium to good effect on conservation and three say that it has a bad effect.

Organization.--Of 34 comments, 20 say that no change is needed, eight say that the current delivery system is adequate, three say that USDA agencies should be combined, and three say that existing FS functions should be fine tuned.

Funding.--Thirty-two comments say to maintain or increase present funding.

Acceptability.--Of 18 comments, eight agree with forestry programs, three give forestry programs a high general rating, and seven say that FS is ready and willing to give assistance.

Some examples of responses about FS activities follow:

"The cost-sharing programs like ACP as handled by ASCS, SCS and FS have proven their ability to solve local soil and water problems."

"Our present relationship with the State and Private segment of the USFS responsibilities is and has been satisfactory, productive and harmonious."

"The set-up between ASCS, SCS and FS provides the necessary elements to accomplish on-farm conservation practices."

"More money should be available for forestry."

"The Forest Service must be given more funds earmarked for cost-sharing woodland improvement, including firewood and production."

Science and Education Administration (SEA)

Nationwide, 253 comments relate directly to SEA. Most deal with organization, 26 percent; funding, 16 percent; acceptability, 9 percent; staffing,

6 percent; or effectiveness, 5 percent. The other 38 percent are listed in the appendix. (Other comments relating to activities conducted by SEA are discussed in chapter 4 under "Proposed solutions to problems" for the resource areas [see pages 4-6 and 4-12], in chapter 6 under "Research and technology development [page 6-17], and in chapter 10 under "Information and Education" [especially Extension] [page 10-9] and "Research" [page 10-10]).

The content and number of comments on SEA seem to indicate that the respondents may not be very familiar with the agency, perhaps because of the recent name change during Departmental reorganization.

Organization.--Of 66 comments, 15 say that the present system is adequate, 29 say that more education is needed, and 22 say that SEA's functions should be combined and coordinated with those of other agencies.

Funding.--Of 41 comments, 20 say increase funding and 21 say maintain the present level.

Acceptability.--Of 23 comments, 15 rate SEA highly acceptable and 8 agree with SEA programs.

Staffing.--Of 16 comments, 14 say they want more technical assistance and two say that SEA already has too many employees.

Effectiveness.--Of 13 comments, seven rate SEA programs high in achieving conservation goals, three rate SEA low, and three say that SEA employees are inept.

Responses about SEA are varied, including such statements as:

> "The Cooperative Extension Service is doing a good job in education."
>
> "ASCS working closely with SCS and ES has done a great job."
>
> "Information and education should be one of the major program directions."
>
> "A positive step the Department of Agriculture could take would be to increase funding for Federal research and extension programs for conservation."
>
> "The Secretary of Agriculture must exercise great leadership to get Extension to support any and all these strategies. Right now Extension in each state goes its merry way as it has done since 1915."

Soil Conservation Service (SCS)

Nationwide, 5,515 comments relate directly to SCS. The comments deal with funding, 17 percent; staffing, 17 percent; acceptability, 15 percent; organization, 12 percent; and effectiveness, 6 percent. The other 33 percent are listed in the appendix.

Funding.--Of 959 comments, 61 percent favor more funding, 38 percent favor maintaining funding at the present level, and 1 percent favor less funding.

Staffing.--Of 1,484 comments, 67 percent favor increasing technical assistance, 32 percent say maintain the same level or provide more to soil conservation districts, and less than 1 percent say decrease technical assistance. Increased staffing was favored by the Northeast, 53 percent; South, 75 percent; West, 81 percent; and Midwest, 63 percent.

Acceptability.--Of 822 comments, 93 percent say that SCS programs are highly acceptable, 2 percent say that they are moderately acceptable, and 5 percent say that they are barely acceptable or unacceptable.

Organization.--Of 664 comments, 89 percent say that the present system is effective and responsive and 11 percent say that redirection of the agency would be desirable.

Suggestions for redirecting SCS programs include (1) consolidating all USDA soil and water conservation programs, (2) combining SCS with other agencies, (3) improving cooperation and coordination between agencies, (4) fine tuning existing programs, and (5) using limited redirection and consolidation. No SCS organizational change was seen as needed by 24 percent in the Northeast, 90 percent in the South, 93 percent in the West, and 87 percent in the Midwest.

Comments supporting existing agency programs include those saying SCS does a "good job," "no change is needed," "the public endorses SCS's efforts," and "the present system is acceptable and responsive."

Effectiveness.--Of 337 comments, 84 percent rate SCS high or very high in achieving conservation goals, 1 percent rate the agency medium, and 15 percent rate it low or very low. Regionally, the Northeast rates SCS high to very high by 91 percent; the South, 83 percent; the West, 86 percent; and the Midwest, 76 percent.

Selected statements on SCS follow:

> "We do need assistance, especially technical assistance such as we receive from Soil Conservation Service employees. A voluntary program is always preferred."
>
> "I strongly feel that there is no need for this program [RCA]. The current program involving SCS and ASCS is doing a very adequate job of educating, guiding and assisting local farmers in their conservation efforts."
>
> "I have farmed and ranched for 40 years. The SCS and others involved are doing a good job. Leave it as it is now. I don't think your appraisal and program report amount to much."
>
> "The present Soil Conservation Service is doing a good job with the amount of funds available. I believe this service should be continued with local people in charge."

The Secretary of Agriculture

About 53 percent of the 136 comments directed toward the Secretary of Agriculture say that he should take the following actions:

	Number of comments
Provide leadership and guidance	14
Plan to save agricultural land for the future	12
Emphasize conservation practices, no restrictions	12
Encourage proper use of land and water	12
Maintain and effectively implement a conservation policy	12
Represent farmers, not consumers	5
Change no programs	4
Total	71

Other comments make up the remaining 47 percent, and no more than two are alike. These include: "no change is needed," "recycle waste," "maintain present level of assistance," "sediment control ordinances are needed," "oppose 5-year plans," "better USDA organization is needed," "there is too much regulation," "fine tuning is needed," and "USDA favors large farms." See the appendix for a complete list.

Selected statements about the Secretary of Agriculture are:

> "We feel that our present programs are adequate to handle most situations and we see no reason for a new bureaucracy to handle conservation matters."
>
> "I feel that RCA will lead to land use laws much sooner than necessary, and would create more and bigger government."
>
> "Try to remove the tax exemption for clearing wetland. Each year in Minnesota alone section upon section of brush and forest is cleared in the central and northwest part of our state. The Secretary should know, this is his home district."
>
> "If this is truly supposed to be a national USDA effort, why were funds not appropriated and communications more strongly emphasized to all heads of all USDA agencies?"
>
> "USDA programs should address national problems, but the solutions must be based on locally identified priorities."

Other/All USDA agencies

Nationwide, 5,560 comments relate to other or all USDA agencies. This total is nearly 30 percent of all comments on agencies. The coding system does not identify these other agencies. Most of the comments deal with organization, 41 percent; funding, 8 percent; staffing, 4 percent; acceptability, 3 percent; and effectiveness, 3 percent. The other 41 percent are listed in the appendix.

Organization.--Of 2,310 comments, 60 percent say that the present agency makeup of USDA is satisfactory and that no new agencies should be established, 38 percent say that an effort should be made to improve efficiency, coordination, and communications among existing agencies; and 2 percent say that any reorganization would cause problems.

Funding.--Of 421 comments, 54 percent say that present funding is adequate, 43 percent say that funding should be increased, and 3 percent say that funding should be reduced.

Staffing.--Of 209 comments, 67 percent say that technical assistance should be increased whereas 33 percent say that present technical assistance is adequate.

Acceptability.--Of 162 comments, 48 percent say that USDA programs are highly acceptable to landusers, 31 percent are neutral, and 21 percent say that programs are unacceptable to landusers and the general public.

Effectiveness.--Of 148 comments, 62 percent say that USDA programs have medium to high effectiveness in getting conservation on the land, 29 percent say that USDA programs have no effect on conservation and that government employees are inept, and 9 percent say that USDA programs have low effectiveness.

A few of the responses pertaining to other agencies or all of USDA are:

> "The USDA is doing a good job, but I believe some duplication and cross purposes could be eliminated."
>
> "Less overlapping of USDA agencies would be of great benefit."
>
> "Favor retaining the present USDA structure with increased coordination and cooperation encouraged among agencies."
>
> "We think the present agencies provide adequate technical authority and provide the leadership needed."
>
> "Fine tune existing USDA organizations."

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Of a total of 18,742 comments on government agencies, only 17 refer to CEQ and OMB. The content and number of comments seem to indicate that the public is unfamiliar with the programs and activities of these two non-USDA agencies and their role in RCA.

Summary

More than 60 percent of the 18,742 comments pertain to only five major issues. These are:

- o Organizational arrangement.
- o Effectiveness in achieving conservation goals.
- o Efficiency in use of dollars.
- o Levels of governmental responsibility (who leads, who pays).
- o Program delivery (level of assistance, voluntary or regulatory).

Those commenting strongly support USDA's present organizational arrangement. Comments favor fine tuning over combining agencies by a 4 to 1 ratio.

Of the comments addressing the effectiveness of USDA agencies, most (89 percent) rate USDA highly to very highly effective in achieving conservation objectives. Only 5 percent say that USDA is ineffective, 2 percent say its effectiveness is low to very low, and 3 percent rate USDA's effectiveness medium. Comments indicate a less favorable view, however, of USDA's effectiveness in using tax dollars. The ratings are: high to very high effectiveness, 39 percent; medium, 23 percent; very low to low, 25 percent; and ineffective, 13 percent.

Most comments (83 percent) say that local governments, not the federal government, should have vested authority for conservation. While strongly supporting conservation as a responsibility of local government, comments also strongly support increased funding from the federal government in helping local government to meet this responsibility.

Comments strongly favor maintaining or increasing present levels of USDA assistance (98 percent) rather than decreasing assistance (2 percent).

Those responding say that the present USDA organizational structure is effective, but some fine tuning and some combining may be helpful in accomplishing conservation. They strongly support local government leadership with increased support from USDA. They much prefer voluntary participation in soil and water conservation to more rules and regulations. They also believe that increased cost sharing along with more assistance in information and education can achieve conservation objectives.

The largest group of comments directed to USDA and its agencies favors making no organizational change. Other frequently made comments call for increasing funding and staffing, increasing technical assistance, and maintaining present levels of USDA assistance, or express opposition to the formation of a new conservation agency.

Chapter 10 - Present USDA Soil and Water Conservation Programs

This chapter summarizes comments received on USDA's present soil and water conservation programs and related programs. Current programs are discussed in the draft of the RCA Appraisal Part II, chapter 5. Alternative strategies (see Appraisal Part II, chapter 6) are ways of changing current programs for the future. Chapters 5 and 6 of Appraisal Part II, therefore, provide the basis for comments on present programs. Additionally, individuals and units of government who participate in present programs and who were aware of RCA's potential impact on these programs made a significant number of comments, independent of the RCA documents' content.

Some sections of this chapter include percentage computations. Where these percentages have been rounded to whole numbers, an asterisk (*) indicates less than 0.5 percent.

The Scope of the Response

Nationwide, 50,097 comments from 21,659 respondents address USDA's present programs. Of those, 32,154 comments are aimed at USDA programs in general, including commodity programs, food stamps, and so on. Another 17,926 comments deal with present conservation programs. Of the comments on conservation programs, 57 percent come from the South, 21 percent from the Midwest, 16 percent from the Northeast, and 5 percent from the West. These responses are in the following forms:

Form of response	Percentage of responses
Personal letter	34
Petition	19
Structured response form	33
Nonstructured response form	13
Public transcript	1
Total	100

Most of the respondents are individuals. The respondents represent various organizations and interest groups, as follows:

Respondent type	Percentage of responses
Individuals	80
Local government	10
Federal government	6
State government	1
Farm organizations	1
Environmental organizations	1
Other	1
Total	100

Table 10-1 shows how many comments and signatures are directed at the different programs.

Table 10-1.--Present USDA conservation programs, by comments and signatures

Program	Comments	Signatures
ASCS Programs:		
Agricultural Conservation Program	9,653	13,818
Water Bank Program	71	74
Forestry Incentives Program	260	261
Rural Clean Water Program	143	182
FmHA Programs:		
Soil and Water Loans	50	113
Farm Ownership Loans	36	36
FS Programs:		
Cooperative Forest Management Program	72	88
SEA Programs:		
Information and Education	3,325	3,680
Research	2,355	8,551
SCS Programs:		
Conservation Operations Program	304	647
Resource Conservation and Development Program	297	370
Rural Abandoned Mine Program	96	136
Watersheds Program	874	1,699
Great Plains Conservation Program	362	512
Multiple Agency Programs:		
Emergency Programs	45	45
Other/All USDA Programs	32,154	70,895
Other/All Non-USDA Programs	262	302
Total	50,359	101,409

Issues Addressed by the Response

Issues addressed most frequently include program support, program level, and program delivery system. Comments generally express support for present programs and delivery systems and object to program level (table 10-2). Most comments suggest that increased funding is the most important issue relating to current programs. Respondents support local control for all programs. In a few cases they recognize the partnership between federal and local governments. Several comments indicate that red tape and regulations restrict the potential of present programs. Respondents also support continuation of voluntary programs; 2,518 comments with 8,838 signatures support voluntary programs or oppose regulatory programs.

Table 10-2.--Summary of comments expressing general support for or suggesting more funding of existing conservation programs, by percent

Program	Expresses general support	Suggests increased funding
ASCS Programs:		
Agricultural Conservation Program-----	14	50
Water Bank Program----------	34	35
Forestry Incentives Program----------	12	42
Rural Clean Water Program----------	19	24
FmHA Programs:		
Soil and Water Loans----------	8	58
Farm Ownership Loans----------	11	28
FS Programs:		
Cooperative Forest Management Program--	14	11
SEA Programs:		
Information and Education----------	76	2
Research----------	75	9
SCS Programs:		
Conservation Operations Program--------	24	23
Resource Conservation and Development Program----------	22	35
Rural Abandoned Mine Program----------	32	8
Watersheds Program----------	40	20
Great Plains Conservation Program------	36	43
Multiple Agency Programs:		
Emergency Programs----------	13	33

Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP)

A total of 9,653 comments address ACP. About 80 percent of these express (1) a need for greater funding, (2) support for the program as it is, (3) the desire for local control of ACP, and (4) support for a voluntary program. Less than 1 percent of the comments express opposition to ACP. A listing of supportive comments follows.

	Percentage of comments
Need for greater funding	
o Increase funding	32.4
o Maintain or increase funding	6.0
o Provide greater incentives through cost sharing	7.2
o Provide adequate funding so the program can achieve its objectives	2.4
o Allocate additional funds to the field	1.7
Total favoring increased funding	49.7
General support for ACP	
o Agree or strongly agree	5.1
o No change needed	4.7
o Effective in getting conservation on the land	4.0
o Additional emphasis is needed	0.6
Total supporting the present program	14.4
Support for local control	
o Support the local committee system	10.2
o Continue the current organization	2.7
o Give responsibility to local government	1.4
o Use local input	0.4
Total supporting local control of ACP	15.0
Support for a voluntary program	
o Keep program voluntary	2.8
o Minimize regulations	0.3
o Eliminate government control	0.1
Total supporting a voluntary program	3.2

Other comments on ACP deal with various other aspects of the program: Who pays for ACP? How available are its funds? Who is responsible for it? How should it be administered? These other comments are addressed in the following lists.

	Percentage of comments
Who pays for ACP?	
o User should pay	0.1
o Federal government should pay 50 percent	0.1
o Federal government should pay 51-100 percent	0.6
o State government should pay 51-100 percent	0.1
o Farmers cannot afford to pay	0.1
Total	1.0

	Percentage of comments
Availability of ACP	
o Restrict ACP to full-time farmers	0.1
o Use ACP to benefit farmers	0.1
o Make ACP available on all agricultural lands	0.2
o Make ACP available on nonagricultural lands	0.1
o ACP funds are inappropriately directed	0.1
o ACP is discriminatory	0.1
Total	0.6
Private responsibility for ACP	
o Responsiblity should be with the private sector	0.2
o Farmers should control conservation practices	0.3
o Landowners should make decisions	0.1
Total	0.6
Government responsibility for ACP	
o Responsibility should be with federal government	0.1
o Responsibility should be with state government	0.1
o Responsibility should be with state and local government	0.1
Total	0.3
Administration of ACP	
o ASCS and SCS should lead conservation programs	0.6
o Administer programs through existing agencies	0.5
o Give responsibility for ACP to SCS	0.6
o Administer all cost sharing through one agency	0.3
o Coordinate ACP with technical assistance programs	0.4
o Consolidate programs	0.1
o Oppose creation of new agencies	0.3
o Eliminate interprogram and intraprogram duplication	0.1
o Improve efficiency and coordination	0.1
Total	3.0

Comments not summarized above are listed in the appendix.

Water Bank Program

The Water Bank Program is addressed by 71 comments. About two-thirds of these support the current program or call for better funding, about one-fifth recommend administrative improvements, and a few oppose the program. These comments are summarized in the following list.

	Number of comments
General support for the Water Bank Program	24
General opposition to the Water Bank Program	4

Need for greater funding	
o Increase or maintain funding	21
o Provide greater incentives through cost sharing	4
Total indicating need for greater funding	25
Administration	
o Give responsibility to local government	3
o Give responsibility to the private sector	1
o Keep programs voluntary	1
o Administer through SCS	5
o Give program responsibility to ASCS	2
o Enforce rules and regulations better	1
o Target program more effectively	1
o Eliminate discrimination in programs	1
Total comments on administration	15

The other three comments recommend additional data or ask for clarification of the documents.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

About three-fourths of the 260 comments on FIP express general support for the program, point to a need for increased funding, or address program administration. These comments are summarized below.

	Percentage of comments
Support for increased funding	
o Increase funding	32
o Provide greater incentives through cost sharing	11
Total	43
General support for the FIP	20
Administration	
o Coordinate RCA and RPA	*
o Keep programs voluntary	3
o Provide adequate technical assistance	1
o Give responsibility to local government	2
o Administer through ASCS	4
o Administer through existing agencies	2
Total	12

Other comments are listed in the appendix.

Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP)

One hundred forty-three comments address RCWP. Many comments express general support for the program or call for increased funding. An additional 10 percent oppose RCWP. Several comments address administration. These comments are summarized in the following list.

	Percentage of comments
General support for RCWP	19
General opposition to RCWP	10
Increase funding	24
Administration	
o Give responsibility to local government	1
o Give responsibility to state government	1
o Coordinate RCWP with PL 92-500	2
o Administer through ASCS	6
o Administer through SCS	5
o Coordinate ASCS and SCS efforts	3
Total	18

The remaining comments on RCWP address a wide range of issues. These comments are listed in the appendix.

Soil and Water Loans

Fifty comments discuss soil and water loans. Most of these comments express support for the program and call for greater funding. Some comments also address administration of the program or oppose the program. These comments are listed below.

	Number of comments
o Increase funding of loans	29
o General support for loans	4
o General opposition to loans	3
o SCS should administer loans	2
o State government should administer loans	2
o ASC county committees should administer loans	1
o Local government should administer loans	1
o Reduce red tape	2
o Stop favoring large farms	2
o Keep programs voluntary	1
o Make conservation a prerequisite for loans	1
o Improve coordination among agencies	1
o Make loans for planting permanent cover	1
Total	50

Farm Ownership Loans

Thirty-six comments address USDA's Farm Ownership Loan program. Many express concern about the economic viability of small farms and about the difficult economic conditions facing young people entering farming. In addition, several letters indicate willingness to make conservation a precondition for loan eligibility. Many comments say that increased funding of loan programs is needed. These comments are summarized as follows.

	Number of comments
o Increase funds	10
o General support for loans	4
o Make conservation a condition for loan eligibility	6
o Make more loans available to new farmers or those with limited resources	6
o Administer loans through ASC county committees	1
o Administer loans through the federal government	1
o Make loans available for tree planting	1
o Make loans available to adopt new technologies	1
o Deny loans for housing on agricultural lands	1
o Reduce red tape	1
Total	32

One comment requests information. Three other comments call for more research and development.

[The support for loans to new farmers is paralleled in the findings of the Harris survey. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 85 percent said that the federal government should provide loans to farmers trying to get started in farming, 10 percent said that the government should not do this, and 4 percent were not sure.]

Cooperative Forest Management Program (CFMP)

Seventy-two comments address CFMP. These comments can be grouped as follows.

	Number of comments
General support for CFMP	
o Additional emphasis is needed	5
o Agree or strongly agree	4
o No change needed	1
Total supporting the present program	10
Need for greater funding	
o Increase funding	3
o Maintain or increase funding	2
o Increase incentives through cost sharing	3
Total favoring increased funding	8
General opposition to CFMP	
o Disagree	2
o Programs are inadequate	2
o Government employees are inept	2
o Unacceptable to land users	1
Total opposing the present program	7

Responsibility for CFMP	Number of comments
o Give responsibility to the private sector	1
o Give responsibility to the federal government	1
o Give responsibility to the state government	1
Total addressing responsibility for CFMP	3
Administration of CFMP	
o Let ASC county committees administer	1
o Give administration to SCS	2
o Administer jointly through ASCS and SCS	1
o Improve interagency cooperation and coordination	2
o Keep program voluntary	1
o Use existing agencies	1
o Make program available on urban and other non-agricultural lands	2
o Let agencies do what they do best	1
Total addressing administration	11
Resource related comments	
o Subsidize the management of forests for offsite and public benefits	12
o Increase forest fertility and productivity	7
o Manage forests for timber, not firewood	4
o Control clearcutting	3
o Prevent conversion of woodlands to croplands	1
o Provide more weed control	1
o Plant trees on marginal land	1
o Stop conversion of forest land to wilderness	1
Total resource related comments	30

The other comments are listed in the appendix.

Information and Education (especially Extension)

Comments relating to information are varied and cannot be grouped as neatly as comments on other programs. Although most comments address information and education activities as carried out through the Science and Education Administration, some comments address information and education in general. Major issues addressed by the 3,325 comments are listed below.

	Percentage of comments
o General support for the information and education activities	49
o Increase citizens' sense of land stewardship	19
o Increase funding	2
o Create USDA model projects	3
o Inform public of data	3
o Hold workshops and meetings	2
	78

The remaining comments on information and education are listed in the appendix.

[Strong support for information and education is also reflected in the Harris survey findings. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 98 percent said that the federal government should inform people about the need to protect such resources as land and water, only 4 percent said that the government should not do this, and 2 percent were not sure.]

Research

Comments relating to research generally support (1) continuation of the program or (2) higher funding levels. More than 80 percent of the 2,355 comments on research address these two issues. Although most comments address research activities as carried out through the Science and Education Administration, some comments address research in general. About half of the comments on research are contained in petitions and form letters.

General support for research	Percentage of comments
o Give research additional emphasis	14.8
o Agree	25.0
o Increase research and development	35.1
Total	74.9
Increase funding	9.4

Other issues mentioned include emphasizing research in agricultural areas, increasing technical assistance, and emphasizing research on soil erosion. None of these comments, however, represents more than 1 percent of all comments on research. A list of all other comments is in the appendix.

Conservation Operations (CO)

Three hundred and four comments directly address conservation operations. About half of these comments offer general support for the program or call for increases in its funding. Other comments discuss administration of the program and who should be responsible for it. These four categories account for two-thirds of the comments made on CO.

General support	Percentage of comments
o More technical assistance is needed	11
o Additional emphasis is needed	4
o Agree or strongly agree	4
o Acceptable to land users or public	1
o Effective use of tax dollars	1
o High or very high general rating	2
o Effective in getting conservation on the land	1

	Percentage of comments
o More support services are needed	6
o No change needed	1
Total expressing general support	30
Need for greater funding	
o Increase funding of program	10
o Increase funds to the field	6
o Maintain or increase present funding	3
o Increase incentives through cost sharing	3
o Redirect funds from sccial programs	*
o Provide adequate funding so the program can carry out its objectives	1
Total supporting more funding	23
Responsibility for CO	
o Federal government should have responsibility	1
o Local government should have responsibility	1
o State and local government should share responsibility	1
o Federal and state government should share responsibility	*
o All levels of government should share responsibility	*
Total addressing program responsibility	3
Administration	
o Continue administration of program through existing agencies	4
o Give program responsibility to ASCS	1
o Give program responsibility to SCS	2
o Administer all conservation programs through one agency	*
o Keep programs voluntary	6
o Use employees who are thoroughly familiar with local conditions	1
o Make programs available in urban areas	1
o Improve efficiency and coordination of program	*
o Use federal control as a last resort	*
o Reduce the number of ASC county committees	*
o Minimize red tape	1
Total addressing program administration	16

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

The major issues addressed by the 297 comments on RC&D are listed below:

	Percentage of comments
o General support for RC&D	23
o Increase funding	35
o Responsibility for RC&D should be at the local level	5
o General opposition to RC&D	7
Total	69

Other comments address a wide variety of concerns, each of which received a very low percentage of comments. These comments are listed in the appendix.

Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP)

A careful review of the responses coded to RAMP indicates that many respondents are discussing mine reclamation rather than RAMP. It is impossible in many cases to distinguish between comments on reclamation and those on RAMP. Restoration of farmland is of primary interest to respondents concerned about current mining.

The 96 comments received generally can be grouped into three major categories: support for the program, opposition to the program, and enforcement of the program. Comments that cannot be grouped are listed in the appendix.

	Number of comments
General support for RAMP	
o Additional emphasis	22
o Agree	5
o High general rating	4
o No change needed	1
o Increase funding of RAMP	8
Total indicating support	40
General opposition to RAMP	
o Disagree	2
o The program uses tax dollars ineffectively	1
o The program is inadequate	1
o Eliminate red tape	1
Total indicating opposition	5
Enforcement of RAMP	
o Require restoration of farmland	17
o Current laws are not adequate	3
o Enforce laws uniformly	1
o Enforce maintenance	1
o Protect farmland	1
Total addressing enforcement	23

Watersheds Program

Watershed planning and operations received 874 comments. Sixty percent express general support for the program or call for increased funding. Other comments express opposition to the program, discuss the resource problems which it should address, or address administration of the program. These comments are summarized below.

General support for Watersheds Program	Percentage of comments
o Additional emphasis is needed	18.6
o Agree or strongly agree	16.6
o Medium to very high general rating	3.5
o Effective in getting conservation on the land	0.9
o No change needed	0.7
Total supporting the present program	40.3
Need for greater funding	
o Increase funding	17.5
o Maintain or increase funding	1.6
o Provide greater incentives through cost sharing	0.5
o Provide adequate funding so the program can carry out its objectives	0.2
o Allocate additional funds to the field	0.2
Total favoring increased funding	20.0

Almost 4 percent of the comments express opposition to the Watersheds Program, and about 1 percent express support for a voluntary program.

About 10 percent of all comments address administration of the program. These comments are listed below.

Responsibility for Watersheds Program	Percentage of comments
o Responsibility should be with the private sector	0.1
o Responsibility should be with the federal government	0.1
o Responsibility should be with the state government	0.1
o Responsibility should be with the local government	0.4
o Responsibility should be with the state and local government	0.5
o Responsibility should be with the land user and government	0.1
o ASCS should carry out the program	0.1
o Combine agencies to administer the program	0.1
o Farmers should administer the program	0.1
o SCS should administer the program	0.5
o SCD's are ineffective	0.1
Total addressing responsibility	2.2

Availability of Watersheds Program	Percentage of comments
o Make program available in urban areas	0.2
o Treat the entire problem area at once	0.2
o Use watersheds to benefit farmers	0.1
o Tailor solutions to individual problem areas	0.9
o Redirect program to more appropriate problems	0.1
o Limit program benefits to full-time farmers	0.1
o Increase availability to small farmers	0.1
Total addressing availability	1.7
Political influences on Watersheds Programs	
o Strengthen laws to minimize politically based decisionmaking	0.2
o Eliminate political appointments in watershed decisionmaking	0.1
o Minimize favoritism in watersheds	0.1
o Politics hamper accomplishment of program goals	0.1
Total addressing politics	0.5
Planning and implementation	
o Coordinate watersheds with PL 92-500 plans	0.1
o Planning is essential	0.3
o Implement plans immediately	0.4
o Concentrate on developing conservation practices, not restrictions	0.2
Total addressing planning and implementation	1.0
Other administrative considerations	
o Make standards more flexible	0.4
o Increase availability of technical assistance	2.6
o Increase efficiency, coordination, and communication	0.6
o Resign yourself; the program is impossible to administer well	0.1
o Reduce paperwork	0.3
o Compensate landowners for participation	0.1
o Tie participation to commodity payments	0.1
o Adjust program as needed	0.1
o Penalize poor practices through public exposure, not fines	0.1
o Combine Watersheds Program with emergency programs	0.1
Total addressing other administrative considerations	4.5

Of the remaining comments, the following are made most frequently:

Resource related comments	Percentage of comments
o Give natural resources a high priority	0.5
o Conservation pays	0.1

	Percentage of comments
o Protect resources at any cost	0.2
o Prohibit flood plain development	0.1
o Give flood damage reduction a high priority	0.9
o Use nonstructural approaches to flood control	0.7
o Do not build unnecessary dams	0.6
o Build more dams, lakes, and levees	3.6
o Flood plains are valuable	6.8
o Protect all farmlands	0.1
o Use small dams to generate electricity	0.3
o Build dams to conserve water and expand water supplies	1.1
o Give water supply for agriculture first priority	0.2
o Encourage drainage	0.3
o Stop roadside erosion	0.1
o Eliminate channelization	0.1
o Increase channelization	0.1
o Prevent irreversible degradation	0.1
o Eliminate overgrazing on public lands	0.1
o Institute streambank stabilization	0.1
o Reduce nonpoint source pollution	0.1
o Keep streams clean	0.1
Total resource related comments	16.3

Comments not listed above are included in the appendix.

Great Plains Conservation Program (GPCP)

The Great Plains Conservation Program is the subject of 362 comments. Almost 80 percent of these comments express general support for the program or call for increased funding of the program. A summary follows.

Need for greater funding	Percentage of comments
o Increase funding	30.2
o Maintain or increase funding	6.9
o Provide greater incentives through cost sharing	2.2
o Provide adequate funding so the program can carry out its objectives	1.9
o Allocate additional funds to the field	1.1
o Redirect funds from social programs to GPCP	0.6
Total favoring increased funding	42.9
General support GPCP	
o Agree or strongly agree	13.6
o No change needed	10.2
o Medium to very high effectiveness in getting conservation on the land	7.8
o Additional emphasis needed	2.2

General support for GPCP	Percentage of comments
o Very high general rating	0.2
o High to very high acceptability to land users	0.9
o Medium to high acceptability to general public	0.9
Total supporting the present program	35.8

A few comments express opposition to GPCP. About 2 percent express disagreement with the current program or call for reductions in funding.

The remaining comments on GPCP deal with various other aspects of the program: its administration, the importance of conservation, support for a voluntary program, the relationship between farmers and GPCP, and other issues. These comments are addressed in the following lists.

Administration of GPCP	Percentage of comments
o Continue administration by SCS	5.4
o Give responsibility to local government	0.8
o Do not give administration to ASCS	0.3
o Administer all cost sharing through one agency	0.8
o Periodically review and update GPCP	0.3
o Adjust the program as needed	0.3
o Enforce rules and regulations more vigorously	0.3
Total	8.2

Importance of conservation	
o Conservation is good	0.3
o Natural resources should be a priority	0.3
o Proper land use is important	0.3
Total	0.9

Support for a voluntary program	
o Keep GPCP voluntary	1.7
o Reduce government red tape	0.2
Total	1.9

Farmers and GPCP	
o Farmers cannot afford to participate	0.3
o Farmers are doing a great job	0.3
o Farmers should control the program	0.3
Total	0.9

Other comments	
o Treat whole farms at one time	3.0
o The public is not concerned about GPCP	0.3
o RCA and PL 92-500 are not coordinated	0.3
o Use tax dollars wisely	0.3
o Increase technical assistance	0.6
o Phase out programs which do not contribute to conservation	0.3
o Guidelines are adequate	0.3

Other comments	Percentage of comments
o Increase research and development	0.3
o Provide bonuses for innovative soil and water conservation	0.3
o Use GPCP incentives to control urban sprawl	0.3
o Ensure adequate farm income, and farmers will take care of conservation	0.3
Total	6.3

Emergency Programs

Forty-five comments address USDA emergency programs. They cover several programs, including the Emergency Loans Programs, the Emergency Conservation Program, the Emergency Watersheds Program, and the Drought-Flood Conservation Program. They also cover, in general terms, all USDA emergency programs.

Almost half of the comments express general support for the programs or call for increases in their funding. However, several comments express opposition, and nearly a fifth of the comments express concern about inappropriate direction of emergency funds. Other comments discuss program administration. A summary of all comments follows.

	Number of comments
o General support	6
o General opposition	4
o Increase funding	17
o Eliminate emergency payments to marginal lands	3
o Redirect funds more fairly	2
o Do not penalize farmers who conserve	2
o Establish uniform standards	1
o Stop favoring large farms	1
o Give program responsibility to ASCS	2
o Use local input	3
o Combine emergency programs with small watershed programs	2
o Stop channelization in the guise of emergency programs	1
o Increase research and development	1
Total	45

Other/All USDA Programs

In addition to comments on specific USDA soil and water conservation programs, 32,154 comments address USDA programs in general, including those that are not directly related to soil and water conservation. These other programs include commodity programs, the food stamps program, food quality and safety programs, and others. Although these comments are of interest to the Department, they have not been reviewed as part of the RCA process. In addition, 262 comments on non-USDA programs were submitted but not analyzed.

Summary

Most comments on USDA's present soil and water conservation programs indicate that people believe that the present system works well but would work even better with increased funding.

> [The high level of support for present conservation programs duplicates the findings of the Harris survey. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 39 percent said that protecting our soil and water is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high and that continuing improvements must be made regardless of cost. Another 38 percent said that we have made some progress in reducing erosion and saving water but we have not yet reached the point where we should be more concerned with holding down costs than with completing the necessary work.]

Both the public opinion poll and the public response should encourage those involved in USDA soil and water conservation programs. Both say that the public supports current programs and is willing to pay more in order to get more done.

Chapter 11 - Related Issues

This chapter covers agricultural issues that are not covered in the other chapters. Nationwide, only 11,258 comments deal with these related resource issues. These comments represent less than 1 percent of the total response. Table 11-1 shows the regional distribution for these comments.

Table 11-1.--Comments on related issues, by RCA region

Issue	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Total 1/
Small farms	294	320	228	112	954
Land use	684	893	996	376	2,958
Retain farmland	487	547	634	212	1,882
Suggestions for governmental action	283	661	1,065	414	2,425
Laws, regulations, and legislation	439	594	962	311	2,314
General social comments	111	302	210	100	725

1/ Total includes responses where the state of origin is not known.

Small Farms

The changing patterns in ownership of agricultural land are discussed in chapter 4, Part II of the Draft Appraisal. These changes and their economic and sociological implications are of considerable concern to USDA and have been discussed in other contexts as well. Of the 64,872 responses analyzed, 603 include comments on small farms. For the most part, these responses are personal letters or were added to structured forms. Of the responses, 172, or 29 percent, are from respondents who identify themselves as farmers and ranchers, 53 are from respondents affiliated with the conservation districts, and 24 are from ASC county committee members.

Of the 1,513,718 comments received, 954 relate to the status and future of small farms. About 31 percent of the comments concerning small farms are from the Northeast RCA region, whereas only 8 percent of the total comments are from the Northeast. About 24 percent of the comments concerning small farms are from the South, whereas 42 percent of the total comments are from the South. The percentages of comments concerning small farms from the West and the Midwest are very similar to those regions' share of the total comments.

[The comments received by the USDA-RCA Response Analysis Center and the results of the Harris survey indicate that Americans continue to believe that small family farms are important. Of those sampled in the Harris survey, about three times as many said they would like to see a large number of small farms (60 percent) as said they would like to see a small number of large farms (19 percent). The rest had no comment or were neutral.]

Virtually all of the comments concerning small farms received by the Response Analysis Center are in favor of protecting small farms. Nearly 7 percent of the comments (66, nearly half of which are from the Northeast) say that the problems of small farmers should receive additional emphasis or express concern about the status of small farms. About 31 percent of the comments (300) say that farmers who work small acreages should be encouraged and protected. Very few people who commented on the RCA documents, however, suggest that the acreage that an individual or corporation could hold be limited.

> [Of those sampled in the Harris survey, two-thirds (67 percent) said they would support more federal control on farmland ownership if these controls would help increase the numbers of small farms and of farm owners. Only 19 percent disagreed. The rest were not sure or had no comment.]

Some people commented on the economic problems of farmers who hold small acreages. A few comments say that small farms are in jeopardy unless assistance is forthcoming from the federal government. More than 1 percent of the comments (12) say that stronger leadership and guidelines are needed. More than 3 percent say that the decline in the number of farms is the result of high taxes, which force farmers to sell their land to developers, and of inflation, which is higher for farmers than for the general public.

A few people point out how difficult it is for young people to get started in farming. They think that the government should provide assistance. They suggest eliminating the inheritance tax to help keep farmland in a family. They also suggest reducing taxes on land sold to young farmers and offering them special grants and loans.

> [According to the Harris survey, 85 percent of the general public is in favor of such grants and loans.]

A few people who responded say that farmers who work small acreages practice better conservation than those who hold large acreages. They say that large operators are more likely to double crop, drain wetlands, and farm to fence rows and are indifferent to erosion. They express opinions similar to those of the North Dakota farmer who writes, "I feel that the small operator or family sized farmer in many cases uses better management and conservation practices and especially so if it is a diversified operation. Many of the large operators, because of time schedules and insufficient use of their large machinery, farm large parcels treating all acres alike for the sake of convenience and efficient operation. Their main concern is volume and efficient work scheduling which doesn't necessarily make the best use of much of the land." Respondents criticize the conservation attitude of owners who do not work their own land and of tenants who work rented land.

Of all comments on all topics, about 300 say that existing policies favor operators of large farms. Of these, 3 comments bearing 16 signatures complain about ACP policies, and 68 comments bearing 95 signatures complain about other USDA programs. These respondents share the opinion of the Minnesota dairy farmer who says, "I would like our government and lending agencies etc. to quit pushing more mechanized farming and get back to smaller family farms.

By helping smaller farmers stay on the farm there will be less precious energy wasted in bigger and bigger equipment when the most abundant energy form we have (people) is overfed and underworked."

Some respondents complain that programs carried out under RCA will probably not be geared to the needs of operators of small farms. A truck farmer from the Northeast says of the RCA documents, "The only thing I see wrong with it is they have no help for the small operator. In my case I had to relocate my operation to another location. The most suitable and reasonable place I could find was 18 acres, and because it is under 20 acres I get no help."

Some respondents are concerned that programs carried out as a result of RCA might discriminate against small farmers on a regional basis. A retired forester in Delaware writes, "The Midwest farmers are big farmers compared to those on the East Coast. This new program seems to be pointing away from the small farmer. Yet, in the past year a concerted effort has been made to reach and help the small farmer. There is a contradiction!"

Some people express opinions about the best way for USDA to help operators of small farms conserve their soil resources. Four percent of the comments on small farms call for increased funding; more than 2 percent, for more technical assistance; and nearly 5 percent, for various subsidies, tax incentives, and loans. More than 1 percent of the comments say that the best incentive for getting conservation practices installed is a high rate of cost sharing. A few comments, however, say that cost sharing aids operators of large farms more than operators of small farms. One percent of the comments say that if farmers received a fair price for what they produce they could afford to practice good conservation without help from the government. A few comments suggest that assistance should go only to farmers who are using measures that help achieve conservation objectives. A few say that assistance now goes to those who deserve it least--to inefficient or part-time farmers or operators of large farms who do not need help and do not care about the land.

A few respondents comment about the possible adverse effects on small farms of the alternative strategies proposed in the RCA documents. More comments are made about the possible adverse effects of the cross compliance strategy and the bonus strategy than about the effects of the other alternatives. Of the total comments directed at the strategies, more comments express opposition to the regulatory strategy than to the others (see chapter 7). Few comments, however, say that regulation would favor large farms, whereas some comments do say that either cross compliance or the bonus strategy would favor large operators unless the programs were specificially designed to avoid such inequity.

Criticism of regulations in general, however, is expressed by some respondents, such as a Washington farmer who says that RCA "appears to me to be a monster imposed to destroy the family farm by more and more regulations." About 5 percent of the comments (51) say there are too many regulations and too much red tape now. About 2 percent express concern for the rights of landowners, say farmers should make the decisions on their land, or call for voluntary programs. About 1 percent express opposition to programs that would turn conservation officers into law enforcement officers.

Nearly 3 percent of the comments express general support for conservation and concern about the status of resources. Respondents stress the need to instill a sense of responsibility and land stewardship; express concern about urban sprawl, the deterioration of resources, and the need to preserve agricultural land for the future; assert that the problems of farmers are important to all Americans; or express disgust with the lack of interest in conservation. Two comments bearing 14 signatures complain that farmland retention coupled with the low profit margin on farms (which respondents feel are directly related) should have been addressed under RCA.

Additional comments that are not summarized in the text are listed in the appendix.

Land Use: Agricultural and Urban

Of the 64,872 responses received by the Response Analysis Center, 1,955 address land use issues and 1,238 address the retention of farmland. Of the responses that contain comments on land use issues, 424 are from respondents who identify themselves as farmers and ranchers and 143 are from respondents affiliated with conservation districts. Of the responses that contain comments about the retention of farmland, 350 are from respondents who identify themselves as farmers or ranchers and 126 are from respondents affiliated with the conservation districts.

A total of 2,958 comments that address land use issues and 1,882 that address farmland retention are analyzed in this chapter. Other comments that concern land use in relation to specific objectives or programs are analyzed in other chapters of this report. Comments addressing the retention of prime farmland are addressed in chapter 5.

As tables 11-1 (p. 11-1) and 11-2 show, the level of concern about these topics seems to vary from region to region. Concern is very high in the Northeast. The comments addressing both land use in general and farmland retention reflect public interest in a variety of issues.

Table 11-2.--Selected comments on land use, percentage distribution by RCA region

Comments	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
All comments on all RCA issues--------	8	38	42	11
All comments on land use--------------	23	30	34	13
All comments on farmland retention----	26	29	34	11
Urban sprawl is a problem-------------	26	30	30	14
Laws are needed-----------------------	70	10	12	7
Owners rights must be protected-------	5	32	51	10

Regional percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Nearly 14 percent of the comments concerning land use and about 10 percent of those concerning farmland retention express support for conservation or concern about the status of the Nation's resources. Most comments relate to conservation and retention of agricultural land. A few comments also express concern about air pollution, water quality, and loss of wilderness areas. Some people say they are very concerned, but very few explicitly say that conservation should have priority over production. Nearly 1 percent (14) of the farmland comments, on the other land, do say that the farmer's survival must have priority over conservation. A few comments express concern about increased flood plain development, reclamation of mined land, and proper use of woodland. Some comments also urge that agricultural land be properly used; for example, one respondent does not think that building chicken houses on prime farmland constitutes proper use.

More than 14 percent of the comments coded to land use and about 8 percent of those coded to farmland retention express alarm over the loss of agricultural land to urban development. (See also the comments addressed to the retention of prime farmland, chapter 5.) Some respondents think that urban sprawl is a greater threat to the Nation's capacity to meet the food and fiber needs of the future than erosion is. A few suggest that closer cooperation between USDA and HUD and more emphasis on urban renewal would reduce the pressure for development on farmland.

The people who express an opinion about the causes of the loss of farmland think that economic forces--such as inflation, low profits, and speculation--beyond the individual farmer's control are responsible. A few think that preserving farmland in areas undergoing urban development would involve legal strategies that are outside USDA's authority.

Many comments about urban sprawl suggest actions that would necessarily involve governmental planning and regulations. A few people want to prevent excessive urban development through local land use controls; a few want to control it through federal lending programs; a few suggest lower interest rates for multifamily dwellings as a way to slow the spread of urbanization; a few want construction of public facilities on prime farmland prohibited; a few think developers should be required to show cause for developing farmland before they are permitted to buy it. A few people complain that the Rural Clean Water Program encourages and supports urban sprawl.

More than 26 percent of the comments addressing land use and about 20 percent of those addressing farmland retention relate to land use decisions on agricultural land. A few comments (about 6 percent of those coded to land use and 3 percent of those coded to farmland) call for governmental regulation regarding such decisions. For example, a few people say that USDA should have the authority to prohibit plowing on sloping land, to regulate the amount of nutrients applied, or to prohibit logging at higher elevations; a few think the government should limit the acreage of irrigated land owned by an individual or a family; a few say that conservation measures should be required by law where conditions adversely affect adjoining property; some want fines levied according to the amount of erosion. More than 1 percent of the comments say that existing laws relating to land use are inadequate, and more than 1 percent say that laws are not adequately enforced. As table 11-2 indicates, 70 percent of the comments calling for stronger laws (85 comments) are from the Northeast.

Many more comments reflect a strong belief that government should not infringe on the right of individual landowners to manage their land as they please.

> [Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 61 percent felt that the owner has the right to make decisions about the use of his or her farmland. Twenty-eight percent felt that it is the public's right to make sure that farmland is used only for producing food. Ten percent were not sure or could not decide.]

More than 5 percent (159) of the comments addressing land use and more than 2 percent (44) of those addressing the retention of farmland assert that the rights of landowners should be considered, that land use controls should be eliminated, that acreage controls and allotments should be eliminated, or that citizen ownership and government control are not compatible. Of all comments on all topics, a total of 1,665 comments express this opinion. Of these, 267 comments are from the West region, 346 from the Midwest, only 43 from the Northeast, and 1,008 from the South. Some respondents reject, in very strong terms, the right of society, through governmental action, to curtail the rights of owners in any way. Others, however, do not object so much to some form of regulation as to perceived unfairness in enforcing regulations. For example, an Idaho farmer says: "Land use planning, I have seen it work in the various areas. But what it seems to do is lock up the lands so that the farmer cannot sell small portions or provide areas for his children to come into the program, but only so long as the developers wish it to be locked up. Then they have ways of getting it rezoned and developed so that they can profit the most from it. I think that it is an area in which we need to be very careful. If land use planning is going to be land use planning, it should be to the benefit of the Nation, not just the developers."

Another 3 percent of the farmland comments and 1 percent of the land use comments complain about red tape and regulations. More than 5 percent of the farmland retention comments and 4 percent of the land use comments say that most farmers do not abuse the soil or other natural resources and will do a good job without government regulations. A few comments from the South express opposition to the RCA 5-year plan. Many respondents share the views of the California farmer who says he is in favor of conservation but warns: "Beware of commissions, environmentalists and other regulatory groups. So many of them are so removed from the land and reality they make little sense in their proposals. Seems that the American Farmer has shown his ability to produce yet replenish the important ingredients in the soil, in the past. Today so many are being pushed off the land because of unrealistic rules and regulations--just the reverse should be true, since the world needs more food and more people who can produce."

As table 11-2 indicates, the opinion that efforts to reduce urban encroachment on farmland constitute a threat to private ownership and individual rights is strongest in the South. About 51 percent of the comments (335) expressing such fears are from the South. Only 33 comments from respondents in the Northeast express similar thoughts. In the Midwest, there may be more opposition than the table indicates to land use planning that would restrict the owner's right to sell to developers. One response form from the Midwest defines retention of farmland as meaning that the farmer retains the right to decide when and to whom to sell his land.

Ninety-three comments say that the responsibility for planning land use and acting to retain farmland should rest with the private sector or local government. Of these comments, 70 come from the South and Midwest regions and 5 from the Northeast. Fifty-four comments say that responsibility should rest with the state alone or with state and local government together; 13 say it should rest with the federal government or with state and federal government.

Nearly 3 percent of the comments addressing the retention of farmland call for the reduction of taxes on farmland, especially the inheritance tax. Nearly 3 percent of the comments on farmland retention and 1 percent of those addressing land use call for various forms of incentives and subsidies to achieve conservation goals (see chapter 7). Almost 1 percent (26) of the farmland retention comments express fear that the government is creating long-range problems in trying to solve immediate ones. Nearly 2 percent say that if farmers received a fair return for their crops they would take care of conservation without help from the government.

A few comments addressing farmland retention are directed to miscellaneous issues. More than 2 percent of the comments express concern about the plight of farmers with small acreages and call for efforts to preserve small farms. More than 1 percent express resentment over the sale of agricultural land to foreigners. More than 5 percent complain about absentee landowners or tenant farmers. They suggest that owners be required to actively manage at least 50 percent of their holdings and be required to take responsibility for conservation on their land. Half of these comments are from the South and one-fourth from the Midwest. Nearly 1 percent of the comments call for some form of licensing to ensure that new farmers are qualified to manage land resources or suggest that the government buy the land from farmers who do not practice good conservation and then sell or lease it to others who are conservation minded. About 1 percent of the comments suggest that vacant farms, idle land, or marginal land be brought into production. Only three of these comments are from the West. More than 1 percent of the comments refer to drainage. The respondents are concerned because the RCA documents mention drainage only in association with wetlands. They say that drainage of wet soils increases production and does not damage wildife habitat.

Suggestions for Governmental Action

This section covers those suggestions for governmental action that do not refer to a specific RCA objective or alternative program. Nationwide, 1,848 responses containing 2,425 comments were coded to this topic. Of these comments, 44 percent are from the South region, 27 percent from the Midwest, 17 percent from the West, and 12 percent from the Northeast. This breakdown is not substantially different from the breakdown for all topics together except that there are more responses from the West and fewer from the Midwest.

The responses are in the following forms:

Form of response	Number of responses
Personal letter	461
Petition or form letter	588
Structured response form	542
Nonstructured response form	222
Public transcript	34
SWCD long range plan	1
Total	1,848

Of the 1,848 responses, 1,500 (81 percent) come from individuals. In addition, there are 174 responses (9 percent) from local governments, 74 responses (4 percent) from federal agencies, and 100 responses (6 percent) from a variety of other sources. Respondents identify themselves as farmers on only 63 responses, or less than 4 percent of those coded to this topic. Of the total responses, 22 percent are from farmers.

About one-fourth of the comments discuss the role of education in achieving conservation goals. This is by far the largest single group of comments. Some respondents comment on the need for more education about environmental issues, about protecting the Nation's productive capacity, and about the costs of conservation. Others call for better education about specific conservation practices. A few respondents say that better qualified teachers are needed. A few argue that education is the best way to achieve conservation goals and is preferable to regulations and penalties.

> [The Harris survey also indicated that the public feels that education is critical to successful conservation. In addition, those surveyed thought that providing education about conservation is a proper role of the government. Ninety-three percent said that the federal government should inform people about the need to protect soil and water resources. Only 4 percent said that the government should not be involved, and 2 percent were not sure.]

The following statements illustrate what some respondents say about the role of education in achieving conservation goals.

> "Provide a more intensive educational program to show the advantages of keeping soil loss levels down . . . ."

> "Establish a public education program covering the public's vital involvement in continued soil productivity . . . ."

> "So many attempts at regulation fall short because they are attempts to enforce regulations that are not understood . . . ."

> In order to have a successful conservation program the government must "get the attention and cooperation of farmers and the general public. If possible, have a magazine such as the 'Farm Journal' present needed information . . . . Farmers are busy people and don't need long articles. Using cartoonists and newspaper articles would be an attraction . . . . This would get attention and inform people of things they can do to help."

A few comments call for conservation laws with teeth and for stronger enforcement of existing laws (3 percent). Far more, about 14 percent of the comments, indicate that the public wants the government to reduce the scope of its activities, improve its efficiency, and cut taxes. Respondents complain that the bureaucracy is too big, that there is too much red tape, and that government is preoccupied with numbers and quotas--in short, abstractions rather than concrete problems and practical solutions. A few respondents complain that there are too many employees at all levels of government. They want nonproductive employees fired, some offices closed, operations reduced, and the budget reduced.

Some comments showing displeasure with government regulation follow:

> "During recent years our productivity lead has been slumping. Is it a coincidence that during this same time period the number of government rules and regulations has increased enormously? If we could get rid of even a few hundred of the most idiotic regulations, farmers would have the financial resources to take better care of the land."

> "The worst offender of soil and water conservation is not the average farmer, but the agricultural policy of the federal government. I refer to the cheap food policy . . . . This forces marginal grasslands into production of wheat and feed grains which causes surpluses of these commodities and low prices. Grain export embargoes haven't helped. USDA must understand that we can't have both . . . unlimited production and good conservation."

> "We must cut down on the size of our government and cut the spending. So please, let's have <u>less</u> government controls not more!"

Although a significant percentage of comments calls on the government to curtail its activities, an equally large group calls for more governmental action. More than 15 percent of the comments are for increased governmental involvement in many different areas. These comments suggest greater funding for conservation districts (1.4 percent), more money for conservation employees (1.2 percent), and more technical assistance (0.8 percent). Some comments (2.0 percent) call for various types of government subsidies for conservation work, including price supports, low-interest loans, long-term loans, tax breaks, and investment credits.

The following are some specific public comments making suggestions for more governmental action.

> "First, continue with research into better farming methods and publicize the results of this research, with pilot programs where feasible. These methods have been successful . . . and would be more so if farmers had more funds to work with. Second, promote conditions whereby farmers can make a reasonable profit."

> "Regulations against building on prime agricultural land is the only way to halt the advance of urbanization, and the destruction of useful productive fields."

There are a multitude of other suggestions for governmental action. Some examples are listed below. Few of these individually amount to more than 1 percent of the comments.

- o Increase research and development.
- o Preserve agricultural land for the future.
- o Enact adequate legislation.
- o Protect and encourage small farms.
- o Increase cost sharing.
- o Decrease taxes on agricultural lands and for young farmers.
- o Reduce nonpoint pollution.
- o Enact land use laws to preserve agricultural land.
- o Penalize those who do not conserve.
- o Use tax concessions to promote soil conservation.
- o Aid farmers in woodland management.
- o Put more emphasis on field training for conservation workers.
- o Give new farmers grants and loans.
- o Provide more leadership and guidance for farmers.
- o Eliminate the inheritance tax.
- o Reestablish the CCC.
- o Control urban sprawl; it consumes more farmland than erosion does.

Nearly 4 percent of the comments call for the government to end policies which reduce farmers' profits. Slightly more than 1 percent demand that farmers receive 100 percent parity. Another 1 percent say that farmers' income must be based on the marketplace rather than on government programs. A typical comment of this type is: "Either up the target and loan prices on grain so we farmers can survive as human beings or get out of our business altogether. Then supply and demand would take care of us . . . . That would also mean no embargoes. It seems that everything the government does works against us, not for us."

Laws, Regulations, and Legislation

General remarks about laws, regulations, and legislation appear in only 2,314 comments in 1,695 responses. These comments, however, represent the views of 7,667 respondents because some comments appear on petitions bearing large numbers of signatures.

Forty-two percent of the comments on laws, regulations, and legislation come from the South, 26 percent from the Midwest, 19 percent from the Northeast, and 13 percent from the West. Therefore, the number of comments from the Northeast is disproportionately high and the number from the Midwest is disproportionately low. The responses are in the following forms:

Form of response	Number of responses
Personal letter	598
Petition or form letter	171
Structured response form	675
Nonstructured response form	228
Public transcript	22
Other	1
Total	1,695

Of the 1,695 responses, 1,319 (79 percent) are from individuals. Another 205 (12 percent) are from local governments, and 75 (4 percent) are from federal agencies. Twenty-two responses (1 percent) were sent by farm organizations and 19 (1 percent) by environmental groups. The remaining 55 (3 percent) come from a variety of other sources. Respondents who identify themselves as farmers or ranchers sent in 466 responses (27 percent).

More than half the respondents (including those who signed petitions) explicitly or implicitly oppose federal laws, regulations, and legislation concerning conservation. Almost 66 percent (5,048 respondents) feel that the private sector rather than the federal government should be responsible for conservation. (Nearly 4,000 people express this view in petitions from Texas.) About 9 percent (690 respondents) call for less government regulation, red tape, and bureaucracy. Some of these respondents feel that regulations are unnecessary or too expensive. Others are displeased by the controls placed on individuals.

> [Of those sampled in the Harris survey, 67 percent said that landowners and the government should share responsibility for conservation, 28 percent said that landowners should have sole responsibility, only 2 percent said that the government should have sole responsibility, and 3 percent were not sure.]

These results differ from the RCA public comments in that they affirm the government's role in conservation. They do, however, agree with the public responses in opposing the view that the government should have exclusive responsibility for conservation.

> [People taking part in the Harris survey also opposed controls on individuals. Sixty-one percent said that the owner's right is more important than the public's right in conservation decisions, 29 percent said that the public's right is paramount, and 10 percent were not sure.]

Some other public comments on laws and regulations are listed below. (The figures deal strictly with the number of comments and not with the number of people making those comments.)

Comment	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Agree with conservation laws and regulations	14	1
Disagree with conservation laws and regulations	49	2
Strongly disagree with conservation laws and regulations	28	1
Maintain the present level of laws and regulations	37	2
Enact additional legislation, and enforce the laws more vigorously	114	4

Comment	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Individual rights of landowners should come first	76	3
Use of forceful methods to achieve conservation is not acceptable	54	2
Oppose uniform national standards	36	1
Federal controls should be the last resort	17	1
Laws and regulation put too many controls on people and cost too much money	16	1
Farmers should control agriculture and conservation	113	5
Farmers are already doing a good job of conserving resources	28	1
Laws and regulations should reflect the farmers' interests	12	1
Control development and urban sprawl	33	1
Taxes are too high	22	1
Eliminate the inheritance tax	13	1
Lack faith in government	15	1
Give bureaucrats more practical experience in the field	14	1
Penalize those who do not conserve	15	1
Laws and regulations are too expensive	12	1
Conservation programs need more local input	10	<1

Some samples of the public comments on laws, regulation, and legislation follow:

"Less government interference with the American farmer in the form of embargoes and regulation will allow the farmer to afford conservation practices."

"I will support any program that will stop the destruction of agricultural land . . . . This can be done by a common sense law dealing with the use of these lands for construction, dumping, and other irreversible or harmful uses."

"There is too much government meddling now (i.e., EQ, EPA, etc) . . . . Too many 'way out' environmentalists are making laws and regulations which do not help the farmers but actually increase the cost of production which in turn makes farming less economically feasible."

"More of the beneficial conservation practices should be laid down as law to the Nation's farmers. In our evaluations we should have a mind for what the situation will be in the future. Land for food production is dwindling and population increasing. The natural quality of food is decreasing because of chemical use in commercial operations."

[The Harris survey included several questions on the fairness of government laws and regulations. The public's attitude toward possible regulations depended on whether landowners would receive financial aid to help pay the cost of complying with the regulations. Fifty-six percent of those surveyed said that if the government required farmers to conserve soil and water and provided loans and financial help to do this, it would be fair to both farmers and taxpayers. Eighteen percent said that such an arrangement would be fair just to farmers, 5 percent said it would be fair just to taxpayers, and 11 percent said it would be fair to neither. Nine percent were not sure.

Those surveyed were also asked if it would be fair for the government to require farmers and other landowners to protect their soil and water without offering any financial help. Thirty-two percent said this arrangement would be fair just to taxpayers, 12 percent said it would be fair to both farmers and taxpayers, and 4 percent said that it would be fair just to farmers. Forty percent said it would be fair to neither and 10 percent were undecided.]

General comments opposing government regulation do not play an inordinately large part in the public's responses. (There are, of course, other comments on regulation that were coded separately as "agree" or "disagree" under the alternative strategy that deals with regulation. These comments are discussed under "Regulatory Emphasis" and "Cross Compliance" in chapter 7.)

General Social Comments

Some comments are too general to fit into specific categories. They are primarily statements of general social values or ideals. Only 503 responses contain general social comments. Altogether, these responses contain 725 general social comments.

Forty-three percent of the comments come from the Midwest, 14 percent from the West, 28 percent from the South, and 15 percent from the Northeast. A disproportionately high number of comments come from the Midwest and a disproportionately low number from the South.

The responses are in the following forms:

Form of response	Number of responses
Personal letter	210
Petition or form letter	68
Structured response form	145
Nonstructured response form	62
Public transcript	18
Total	503

A total of 396 responses, 79 percent, are from individuals. About 29 percent are from farmers or ranchers. The next two largest groups of respondents are local governments (47 percent) and federal agencies (20 percent). The responses from local governments include 28 from conservation districts.

The general social comments are fairly disparate. Therefore, the groupings used here are to some degree a subjective convenience for organizing "odds and ends." The comments can be grouped as follows: proconservation, antigovernment, laissez faire, and other.

	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Proconservation		
Farmers' problems and the use of the land should concern all Americans	29	4
Support a "waste not-want not" philosophy	24	3
General approval of conservation	22	3
Conservation of soil and water should receive very high priority	19	3
More emphasis, money, or tax concessions are needed for conservation	13	2
The Nation needs plans to save agricultural land, fresh water, and energy for future use	9	1
Everyone should share the cost of conservation	131	18
Subsidize conservation	4	1
Very concerned about conservation	3	<1
	254	35
Antigovernment		
Forceful methods of achieving conservation are not acceptable	84	12
There is too much regulation	28	4
There is too much red tape and bureaucracy	27	4
Lack faith in government	4	1
Government programs are a waste of tax money	1	<1
	144	21
Laissez faire		
Individual rights of landowners come first	89	12
Conservation programs should be voluntary	8	1
Farmers are already doing a great job	32	4
A free market economy will take care of the problems	24	3
Farmers and other landowners should make all conservation decisions	20	3
Responsibility for conservation should be with the private sector, landowner, or farmer	4	<1
	177	24
Other		
Control conservation problems through education	12	2
Environmental goals and abundant cheap food are not compatible objectives	10	1
Conservation programs should be designed to benefit farmers and landowners	10	1
Government should promote farming as an occupation	8	1

Other	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Government should give more leadership and guidance to farmers	7	1
Low profits, high operating costs, and taxes are endangering small farms	5	1
Oppose uniform national standards for conservation	4	<1
Recycle wastes	3	<1
USDA should expand programs into areas of social concern	3	<1
	62	8
Comments that could not be grouped in a meaningful way	---	12

Samples of some general social comments follow:

"At no time should the rights of the individual landowner be controlled or denied. No mandatory conservation or use of private land can be tolerated in a nation which professes to be a democratic republic."

"We as Americans should be stewards of our soil and natural resources if future generations are to live in our world. Everyone should be interested in preserving our soil and water."

"In the drought of '77 money was appropriated for wells (Wapato Irrigation District) but the season passed and the money remains 'in the bank' . . . . This type of problem is fairly common in the smaller areas without effective organization or individual resources. A related problem is that the farmers, most in their 50's and 60's, are tired of fighting the battle . . . . My head hurts from the bureaucratic stone wall."

Chapter 12 - Conclusions

The RCA public review process was one of the largest interagency public participation efforts ever undertaken by this Department. Some 10,000 copies of the draft Appraisal and draft Program Report and Environmental Impact Statement were distributed for review. In addition, 200,000 copies of the Summary were made available to the public. The public submitted nearly 65,000 responses, which contain over 1.5 million comments and represent the views of 118,000 people. Responses were received from all 50 states and the Caribbean area. More responses are from Arkansas than any other state.

On nearly half of the responses, the respondents do not identify their occupation or affiliation. Twenty-two percent of all responses are from farmers and ranchers who do not indicate affiliation with any other group or organization. If replies from conservation districts, ASC county committees, and farm organizations are added to these, the agricultural community accounts for 37 percent of all responses. (In contrast, farmers and ranchers make up only 3 percent of the national work force and, therefore, 3 percent of those sampled in the Harris survey.) Most replies, nearly 80 percent, came from the South and Midwest. Table 12-1 shows the distribution of comments by topic group.

Table 12-1.--Comments, by topic group

Topic group	Number of comments	Percentage of comments
Assumptions and projections----------	25,376	2
Soil, water, and related resources----	16,019	1
Conservation objectives----------	577,882	38
Conservation activities----------	27,810	2
Alternative strategies----------	765,759	51
Agencies----------	18,741	1
Present programs----------	50,097	3
Related issues----------	11,258	1
Miscellaneous----------	20,704	1
Total----------	1,513,556	100

Comments on the strategies and objectives account for nearly 90 percent of the comments. The number of structured forms submitted could have influenced this distribution of comments. About 57 percent of the responses are structured forms, and nearly all versions of these forms include alternative strategies and objectives.

The preceding chapters deal with the subjects in detail. What follows are the principal conclusions.

The RCA Process; Assumptions and Projections

Many respondents appreciate the opportunity to comment but say that the draft documents did not reach enough people. Some respondents also mention inadequacies in the RCA process, especially in the public participation aspects. They say that copies of the RC documents were not sufficiently available, that the review period was not long enough, and that the meetings were held at inconvenient locations. Some respondents doubt some of the assumptions and projections and feel that they cannot be substantiated. Many ask for additional research and documentation. Some say that the type of trade data offered would be useful if it were credible. Respondents favor exports as a way to sustain farm income, balance the trade deficit, and encourage conservation activities.

Soil, Water, and Related Resources

Respondents seem to show a deep appreciation for and to attach value to soil, water, and related resources. Many comments reflect a good understanding of resource status and trends. They also express concern over the capacity of the resources to meet increasing future demands.

Respondents are in fairly close agreement with USDA's perception of the Nation's resource problems. However, they express greater concern about soil and water and wildlife habitat than about waste management, recreation, and open space. They do mention conflicting demands on certain resources.

Conservation Objectives

Comments on objectives are the second largest group of comments. Respondents express strong support for USDA's traditional conservation objectives. Soil erosion reduction should be the cornerstone for a USDA program, according to the comments received here and in the Harris survey. Respondents say that the Department should take an active role in protecting and preserving farmland but should not attempt direct federal control. They give strong support to retention of farmland.

Conservation objectives directed to noncropland, such as wetlands preservation and wildlife habitat improvement, are supported by a majority of those who comment on these issues but rank low in an ordinal ranking of all objectives. Respondents do not want efforts directed toward meeting these objectives to divert USDA resources and personnel from what they see as more important conservation concerns (those affecting cropland). Traditional objectives, such as erosion control and flood damage reduction, are seen to at least partly benefit society. Therefore, the respondents want the beneficiary, through the federal government, to help bear the cost.

The respondents appear to feel that many conservation problems originate in urban areas. Respondents accept USDA's moving into urban conservation if by doing so it would help solve resource problems.

Conservation Activities

The responses to conservation activities that are proposed to meet the objective indicate that respondents believe most farmers are conservation minded and sincerely want to be good land stewards. What respondents desire from the Department of Agriculture is cooperation and assistance in carrying out their desire to conserve resources. A proper role of government, they are saying, is assisting individual farmers in things they cannot do for themselves--research, technical assistance, and economic information--and providing cost sharing for practices that benefit society but yield little or no short-term economic return to farmers. Most respondents commenting on cost sharing believe that the federal government should pay more than 50 percent of the cost of conservation activities.

Comments addressing the adequacy of the proposed activities for achieving conservation objectives say, by a 3 to 2 margin, that the activities taken as a group are adequate rather than inadequate. Activities most supported include erosion control measures, structural flood control measures, conservation tillage, and drainage. Least popular are wetland retention policies and data collection methods, which are criticized by a number of respondents. The activities most often mentioned are technical assistance, agricultural research, and erosion control measures. In short, respondents say that activities are worthwhile and should be carried out but that this can be done only if land users and government cooperate in the interest of conservation.

Alternative Strategies

The alternative strategies received over half (51 percent) of all comments made in the public review. Respondents express opinions ranging from strong support to strong opposition. Based on these responses, redirecting present conservation programs is the preferred alternative, receiving 80 percent favorable comments. Conservation bonuses, which could provide higher price supports and cost sharing rates or more favorable interest rates, rank second in preference with 72 percent favorable. In rating strategies in terms of their probable effectiveness in achieving conservation goals, respondents rank the bonus strategy first and redirected programs second.

Respondents rank regional projects, natural resource contracts, state leadership, and cross compliance about in the middle, with favorable and unfavorable comments about even. The use of regulation as a conservation tool ranked last, with only 37 percent supporting the strategy.

Alternatives, Objectives, and Activities

Only a tiny fraction of the 1.5 million comments link specific strategies with specific RCA objectives. This lack of response may be due to respondents not clearly understanding how a given strategy might work to achieve a conservation objective. For instance, setting water quality standards (regulation) may be the only suitable strategy for achieving water quality objectives. If respondents cannot support regulation, they need to know and accept the consequence that the water quality objective cannot be met. The relationship between strategies and objectives should be clearly spelled out in the next draft of the RCA program.

Of the comments dealing with more general relationships between the alternatives, objectives, and activities, more favor redirecting existing programs than any other strategy. Most comments support increasing funding, phasing out programs that duplicate services, and linking programs more tightly to soil and water conservation objectives. They say that programs should be flexible and voluntary and should provide incentives for encouraging conservation. They also say that programs must pay off before farmers will accept them.

USDA and Its Agencies

Repondents generally perceive USDA and its agencies to have an effective delivery system for resource conservation programs. They therefore believe the present arrangement is satisfactory. There is no clear call for reorganization. However, respondents recognize that some fine tuning and redirection of some programs might be helpful.

By number of comments regarding agencies, respondents favor making no organizational change, increasing funding, increasing technical assistance, and maintaining present levels of USDA assistance but oppose creating a new conservation agency.

Present Soil and Water Conservation Programs

The comments on the Department's conservation programs are similar to those made about its agencies. Respondents generally support the programs and the agencies administering them and believe that with adequate funding, the present programs could meet the resource objectives.

Related Issues

The few respondents commenting on the status of small farms say that in planning programs USDA should consider the needs of operators of small farms.

A few respondents comment on the issues of land use planning and the retention of farmland. Some respondents, mostly in the Northeast, say that regulation is necessary to prevent urban development on farmland. Others, especially in the South and Midwest, express opposition to government action that would curtail the rights of landowners.

Respondents offering suggestions on governmental action seem to think that education is the most acceptable government activity related to conservation. Some comments say that the government should provide increased funding for conservation. An equal number say that the government should reduce its regulatory actions.

Most of the respondents commenting on laws and regulations seem to believe that conservation can be accomplished through action by the private sector. They oppose government regulation and favor a voluntary approach to solving conservation problems. A small number of all comments express concerns about

inefficiency and red tape in doing business with the government. However, general comments opposing government regulation do not play an inordinately large part in the public's responses.

* * *

In the final analysis, respondents seem to say that they are fairly well satisfied with present conservation programs. They request more funds for on-the-ground implementation and less regulation and red tape. They suggest that better communication and coordination among USDA's conservation agencies would also improve delivery. These comments translate to a desire for a voluntary, locally controlled, highly subsidized, nonregulatory program. If alternative strategies are combined, the preference is for redirecting present programs, utilizing conservation bonuses, enforcing cross compliance in special areas, and implementing regional resource projects in areas of serious resource problems. Such a program would be a combination of alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6, a combination which is actually suggested by only 250 respondents.

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